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When is art academic?
Roger Benjamin

Paint, pearls and swine: Robert Hunter Paintings 1966-88
Julie Ewington

An interview with James Mollison: *part two*

COMMENTARIES FROM SYDNEY • MELBOURNE • ADELAIDE • ARTNOTES • SALESROOMS

Bill poster, *Daily Mirror*, 23 October 1973 referring to the Australian National Gallery's purchase of *Blue Poles* by Jackson Pollock.

A stitch in time ...

A cautionary tale about the perils of neglect

The British public (or some part of it at least) has suddenly been made aware of the likely consequences of the frightful neglect of its great museums and galleries whose presence contributes so much to the tourist trade and not a little to the country's cultural life.

> Roofs are patched and let in rain. Lighting and air conditioning installations are obsolete and are prone to failure. Wiring, fire and security systems have to be replaced, and as a consequence of the general dilapidation it is no exaggeration to say that the paintings are at daily risk.
>
> NEIL MACGREGOR, director of the National Gallery

> We have inherited a building in need of immediate expenditure of millions to halt and reverse its dilapidation.
>
> Annual report of the National Gallery's trustees (chair: Jacob Rothschild)

> We would like to build up our collection of post-war painting. But we are getting people saying, 'Why should we give things to the Tate? The rooms are dirty. We've heard that the roof leaks.' And they are not convinced we will make the best use of the works they donate.
>
> NICHOLAS SEROTA, director of the Tate Gallery

> Buckled and cracked because of high humidity.
>
> Tate conservation department report on Miro's *Message from a Friend*

> Picture support began to shrink because of humidity. Removed from display.
>
> Tate conservation department report on Paul Delvaux's *Leda*

> There are no fire detectors in the main building. It cannot afford them, nor sunblinds on its glass roof. The temperature climbed so high in one gallery that it shattered one of the glass panels on Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors Even.*
>
> *Sunday Telegraph,* 27/7/89

The Tate is forced to cut corners on its building repairs, and one of its prized Matisses, *'Escargot,* has had two narrow escapes as a result. The roof above it was replaced 10 years ago, but without the up-to-date methods for protecting glass panes. When it leaked a couple of years ago, sending water pouring down inches from the frame, the roof was repaired fairly cheaply, and the Matisse put back. When it leaked again, the Tate had no choice but to call in a more expensive firm.

Sunday Telegraph, 27/7/89

> Paintings at the Tate are being hospitalised by the building.
>
> Tate staff member

> The situation is now such that we cannot put on any exhibition either at the V&A or at the Theatre Museum which is not fully sponsored.
>
> Mrs ESTEVE-COLL, director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, quoted in the *Guardian,* 2/8/89

> In the long run, it is inevitable that items will be damaged unless essential building work is done. Our wiring and heating is antiquated, increasing the dangers of fire and flooding.
>
> JOE EARLE, head of Public Service, V&A, quoted in the *Observer,* 23/7/89

These problems surfaced to the public eye because the British Government tried to get the major museums to take over the buildings that housed them and accept total responsibility for their running and repair. Until now the Government has looked after them through the Property Services Agency, which has neglected them through lack of cash and a measure of indifference.

At this point some directors smelled rats. The Government reckoned the Tate's buildings would need £3.9m spent on them over the next financial year. The wary Tate commissioned its own survey and discovered that over the next five years basic repairs would cost a minimum of £25m. The National Gallery found that 'essential repairs' would cost £22m, and that its total requirement stands at £42m. The V&A's trustees reckoned that *their* bill would be £50m.

> The Tate's trustees said they were unwilling to take over long-term legal responsibility for their freehold unless more Government funds were provided. The V&A trustees are also refusing to take over their freehold without a promise of an additional £50 million.
>
> *Observer,* 16/7/89

The heads of the five major national museums, all eminent and respectable gentlemen (all male), wrote jointly to Mrs Thatcher warning her that they faced a crisis.

Mrs Thatcher, however, is not thought to be overly sympathetic either to their pleas or to museums and galleries generally.

> When Mrs Thatcher opened the Design Museum ... two weeks ago, she commented that it should have been called 'an exhibition centre and not a museum - a museum is something that is really rather dead'.
>
> *Observer,* 23/7/89

She (and her rather more sympathetic but over-awed Arts Minister) have urged galleries and museums to go for sponsorship. They have long done so, and bookshops, gift counters, admission charges to special exhibitions all contribute to the running costs.

It was Peter Jenkins who pointed out in the *Independent,* 20/7/89, under the headline 'Thatcher's legacy of leaking roofs':

> The Government's treatment of the museums is not only wrong-headed but short-sighted. They are important earners. ... This Government spends on the arts overall less than half as much as France, West Germany and other European countries. Mrs Thatcher would like to see private patronage taking over from state subsidy and regards the arts in Britain as an appendage of the welfare state ripe for Thatcherisation.

The making of the Australian Part II

In this exerpt from interviews with James Mollison conducted by Rosalie Gascoigne, David McNeill and Peter Townsend, the director of the Australian National Gallery discusses Blue Poles, the Gallery's education programme, the Gallery's role in the promotion of contemporary art and his views on sponsorship. In the third and final extract to be published in our October issue Mollison discusses his collection policy and his ideal Gallery.

David McNeill: We've recently seen extracts from the Finance Department Report on Heritage Management. It's difficult to get a copy. Perhaps the people who wrote it aren't particularly proud of it. But the impression one gets is that the Finance Department have decided there is a universal entity called 'The Gallery', or 'The Art Museum', which has a set of criteria that can be applied to any other gallery, so that the ANG is assessed as if it were no different from the major state galleries, which have been building collections over a hundred years or more. It asseses gallery performance merely in terms of attendance statistics.

James Mollison: That was a dishonest report. It was written, I believe, by junior staffers who had been told to cut this much percentage from Government expenditure over that area, and they began with the Gallery. The statements in it included such things as 'the public would not notice if the gallery were closed two or three days per week.' That's patent nonsense. They went on to suggest that the collection should be financed - and I would think they meant on a continuing basis - by the sale of 60 per cent of the low-priced stock. Recently I heard that the people who had committed that report were publicly stripped of all dignity by a Minister.

DMcN: Unfortunately the report found its way into the media.

JM: It was led into the media by the people who put the report together, believing that that would cut the Gallery down to size.

DMcN: Or possibly sink the Museum of Australia.

JM: It was part of that as well.

DMcN: One thing the Report does point out is that there is a difference between a national gallery in a small city and a state gallery in a city of three million.

JM: The gallery in Canberra now has an audience about ?6 per cent, which is made up of people who have never been to an art exhibition anywhere, never been to another gallery. When we ask them which of our advertisements brought them, they say, 'We didn't see anything, somebody told us to go'. The gallery's serving an important purpose. It's introducing people to art because it's there, and it's one of the things you do when you go to Canberra. Initially people came to see what the fuss was about. As soon as they got into the Australian galleries which used to be hung with all of the arts in fairly strict chronological order, we won their hearts and they went away saying to people, 'Look, there's a lot of rubbish in there, but you have to go to it.'

DMcN: You had to walk past the 'rubbish' to get to the Australians?

JM: Yes. And now, after colonial Australian, *Blue Poles* is the most popular thing because it's a very accessible picture. It's a very pretty picture, which is why I have never actually liked it.

Peter Townsend: You didn't like it even when you bought it?

JM: Not to my personal taste by a mile.

PT: What were you thinking of in buying it?

JM: It appeared to be the most important American painting still privately owned, and if the notion of the collection was to put together a small group of things that were absolutely key examples of that sort of art, it seemed to me to be a very good basis. And it proved so. We had to pay expensively for it, and also for the de Kooning, but those two works brought us the offers of all of the remaining seminal American material. That caused the European dealers to compete to get something of their artists in the collection. I don't claim to be bright enough to have known that that was going to happen, but it certainly did happen.

DMcN: Did you feel it would be a sensational purchase that would put the ANG on the map?

JM: Never occurred to me. I don't think in those terms.

DMcN: There was an opportunity in the press for Pollock to have been made interesting when there was all the fuss over the purchase and yet it seems to be an opportunity that the press didn't want to hear of.

JM: It served nobody's purposes at the time but to present Pollock as anything other than 'Jack the Dripper'.

DMcN: But it was a missed opportunity for a large scale education. One got the impression at the time that a lot of people were asking, not in a hostile way, why

New Zealand's gift 'Muldoon's revenge?'

Senators condemn $10,000 painting

The $10,000 painting presented to the Australian people this week by New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Brian Talboys, has again come under the critical eye of MPs.

On Wednesday, the Opposition Whip in the Senate, Senator Georges, described the 22ft x 7ft (6.7 metres x 2.1 metres) abstract painting as a "placard."

He asked if it was "Muldoon's revenge" on the Australian people. (The Prime Minister of New Zealand is Mr R. D. Muldoon.)

Senator Georges told the Senate it should be aware of the old saying: "Beware of Greeks when they come bearing gifts." He asked if it applied to New Zealanders, too.

The Minister for Administrative Services, Senator Withers, said it was not for him to comment on the artistic merit of the painting, but added that one senator had said he thought the painting was a "digital clock."

Senator A. Missen (Lib, Vic) asked in the Senate yesterday that the painting be removed from Kings Hall, where it is on display.

"When can the Senate be assured that this unsightly eyesore will be removed from Kings Hall so that it will no longer intimidate senators, members and visitors?" he asked.

This drew a rebuke from the President of the Senate, Senator Laucke, who said he "deeply regretted" Senator Missen's question.

"We have in Kings Hall a gift from the Government and people of New Zealand to the people of Australia," he said.

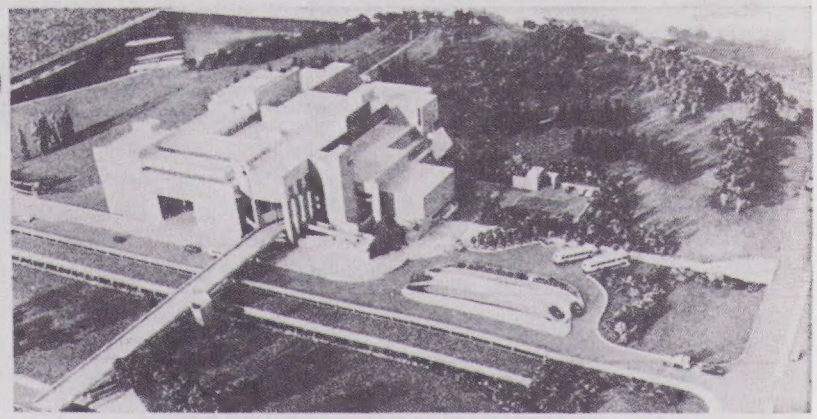
"That painting will be on display in Kings Hall until next week and then will be taken to the Australian National Gallery."

Victory over Death, the 6.7 x 2.1 metre (22ft x 7ft) painting which New Zealand has given to Australia.

Sydney Morning Herald *headline, 17/3/78*

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

...and into the future



THERE is something sadly incongruous about the present surroundings of Australia's national art collection. Some of the world's most original and sought-after works of art repose in an austere warehouse — originally intended to be a supermarket — in Canberra's light industrial suburb of Fyshwick.

West Australian *headline, 26/8/79*

should we buy this work? What does it mean? There was an opportunity in the media, wasn't there, for the dissemination of information about its significance?

JM: Then why didn't senior academics join in?

DMcN: Maybe they did and the newspapers wouldn't publish their descriptions?

JM: Those who were quoted in the newspapers didn't write letters to the editor in due course saying they were misquoted.

DMcN: The issue was one of nationalism, wasn't it?

JM: It sure was. With people like yourself absolutely hot-headed about Australia rather than Australia's place among similar achievements.

DMcN: The irony is that at the time a lot of impetus for the national view came from perceptions at the Whitlam Government and yet, of course, it was Gough Whitlam who was most enthusiastic about the purchase.

JM: He was certainly very supportive. I had no idea if he knew who Pollock was before. But he accepted our recommendation that we should buy the picture without a ny hesitation at all. If the country had had a perceptive media and one wishing for the further education of the public, the situation would have been different.

PT: The policy of getting 50 or 60 key or transitional works, some pre-1850s, some post-1850s.

JM: Originally 35 works in both sections.

PT: Was that in any way derived from a suggestion of J.J. Sweeney?

JM: No way at all. Sweeney only wanted contemporary art.

PT: Where did the suggestion come from?

JM: It came from me. I grew up in Melbourne. When I was sixteen I actually knew the catalogue of the gallery by heart. I didn't know what you did in galleries, but they had a catalogue, so I learned it from beginning to end. Then I went to Europe and I discovered that I had not actually seen one of the great Titians in the Melbourne collection. Nor had I seen the very finest Van Eyck there. Now I got into places like the Sistine Chapel, Chartres Cathedral. I stood in front of Veronese and Titian and Leonardo and Raphael in that great room in the Louvre, and I was unable to control myself, I simply howled in front of the things. I still know when something is really good becuase I somehow fill up in a strange emotional fashion and when people said to me 'Do this in Australia', I thought 'Well, now, what am I to do'. And a famous British art dealer brought out, over two or three years, two collections with the notion of selling them to us. We certainly had enough money to be able to buy each of those collections. But it seemed to me that that was just continuing the run of good examples, not oustanding examples. So we set ourselves a rule that if there was something better of that kind somewhere else we wouldn't try to bring the lesser thing to Australia. And it is very interesting to me that people are now saying, 'We have just been overseas. We looked at pre-Columbian material in America and what is here is better.' They say the same about our African material. Well, it was all very deliberately done. The two Rothkos we have are both in immaculate condition and he is an artist whose technique was inadequate and most of his pictures have collapsed on him.

PT: But this policy of master works landed you in trouble.

JM: In relation to the media. The Government was very supportive except when Fraser came into power after Whitlam was toppled.

DMcN: There was some problem with the art world, wasn't there? There was the debate with Professor Tomory, for example, who was attacking the notion of a masterpiece.

JM: Because Tomory wanted the gallery to be as Bernard Smith wanted it. As Alan McCulloch did at one time. They wanted it to be a collection of Australian arts and crafts.

DMcN: That would certainly be McCulloch's and I think Bernard's position. Tomory's position was that regardless of where you are collecting, individual masterpieces won't do the job. It is better to have a series of major works that give a sense of the context.

JM: Yes, but I see masterpieces as major works. Footnoting material is easy to find.

DMcN: But, you then have the problem of somebody who isn't familiar with art history, walks in, sees *Blue Poles* and doesn't have that 'gut-wrenching' feeling. Because part of that is your experience of abstract expressionism in its historical context. If you take that away, the painting itself won't give it to you because it's a cultural object.

JM: But nobody is going to get that experience if they walk in there for the first time. Not if they walk in with their minds made up. There was a day when this couple were mumbling away in front of the picture, he came towards me because I was wearing my security pass and she went up to Michael Lloyd because he was wearing his, and, with all the belligerence they could muster said, 'What's this rubbish?', five minutes later we said that we have to go somewhere else now, and they both walked towards each other saying, 'Wasn't that interesting. What did he say to you?' Because they were not people with closed minds. They were people with prejudice before they came in, and they

carried that prejudice with them while they looked at the picture, but they melted as soon as we started to talk to them about where it had been made and the time at which it had been made. And look at that, can you see any of that reflected there? 'Oh yes,' they said.

PT: That must have pleased you because you have always been interested in the educational facility.

JM: In the education programmes we run during one of our visiting exhibitions 62 per cent of the people who come to those shows get an educational service from us of some kind, from the full lecture in the theatre to the volunteer guides standing in front of something saying, 'If you would like me to, I will talk to you about this for the next two minutes.' The use that schools are making of the Gallery now is something that can never be turned back. We get more visitors per year from Sydney than Sydney (AGNSW) gets school visitors and most of the school visitors in the Sydney gallery simply arrive and then they leave. Our visitors from Sydney get a dose which lasts from thirty minutes to two days in some cases. We run weekend seminars for serious senior students who come from areas where we know they have never seen anything at all. Now we are running a course for Year 11 and 12 students which is an accredited course that helps towards their university entrance and we believe that in a couple of years, when we have rewritten it, it could be given wherever there is any sort of museum, be it zoo, botanical gardens or whatever, because all museum material relates to other experiences and I believe that in time the course will be adopted in many parts of Australia.

PT: Then you trained up staff?

JM: The educational staff is quite big. I think there are seventeen of them. We have gone past the day when we took on the best school teachers. The people who are coming to us now are people of very exceptional quality who want to be part of a museum's educational service.

PT: That is one aspect of the kind of gallery presumably that you had in mind when you said you hoped the gallery would be so relaxed that people wearing denims would feel happy there.

JM: Well, remember that at one time people got dressed up to go to art galleries.

PT: So from the beginning you were trying to create a gallery that would be acceptable to anyone?

JM: That is how galleries should be. Unlike American galleries, which often have the air of very exclusive clubs. We have no rule about people in bare feet or shorts and singlets. We are pleased that people come in. One day I was in the Members' Lounge when it was still the coffee shop and two guys in bikie gear came in and said, 'Wouldn't you know, they've got more of this f— stuff in here as well.' We don't win them all but generally our visitors do have a good time with us. Even the people who sit down in the black chairs and sleep.

Adelaide Advertiser, *4/3/76*

PT: I've seen references to you at the time of the Gallery's opening, about the length of your hair and the kind of shirts you wore.

JM: I came from Melbourne. Melbourne was a very stylish city and if people were wearing long hair, then I had long hair.

PT: But they probably weren't in Canberra.

Rosalie Gascoigne: No they weren't. I remember one opening and you and your mates from Melbourne all came in tank tops. It made an extraordinary impact on the art life of Canberra: Daniel Thomas in his panama hat - Frank Watters up to push his artist who was being shown; you and your mates jumping around in tank tops looking about 18. Something we had never seen.

DMcN: You were very mod, long sideburns, bell-bottom trousers?

JM: I also had a deep suntan and I'm suffering for it now.

DMcN: There's a problem as the Finance Committee Report sees it, about a major 'sedentary' gallery in a city of 260,000 people. But the ANG Collection is not a sedentary one and I gather the touring programme has been boosted.

JM: 76 per cent of our visitors come from outside the ACT district, and we regard the ACT disctrict as including Cooma, Yass, Goulburn, Bateman's Bay. Only 12 per cent of our school visitors at major exhbitions come from Canberra, so we are bringing kids in from other parts of the country including from Brisbane Boys' Grammar School. I know it's a school of privileged youngsters but the entire school comes down to every one of our big exhibitions and the education staff actually fight who will be allowed to deal with them because the kids look forward to it. But the thing that has made our education programme successful is the skill of those people who talk to kids. When you are dealing with a mixed class of 16 to 18 year olds in holiday mood they jostle one another from the moment they get those stools. It's all body language and aggression. They don't want to sit down in front of the first thing they stop to look at. Three things later they are lambs. And you see the people with those tiny children, those people, the very best of those people hit the kids on their own terms and interest them.

DMcN: But you are going to reach more people if the ANG's works go elsewhere?

JM: Last month we had more visitors to Australian National Gallery exhibitions touring Australia than we had to people in the Gallery. That's the purpose of the travelling exhibition programme. Last year there were 28 openings elsewhere. This year there were 36 openings planned. If the Government hadn't whittled away at our staff we would have had 48.

DMcN: The danger is that your successor may see the programme as a forum for putting 'minor works' out.

JM: We have shown the country that the best things from the collection are better to look at than reproductions and the ruffies that some galleries have toured.

DMcN: Are you confident that the programme will have that structured into it when you leave?

JM: They would have to get rid of a lot of stuff. They would also have to persuade the Gallery Council that we should now start sending out second-best material. I've been under great criticism from my peers for sending out things of the finest quality. Other gallery directors don't like it because it means that they have to upgrade their acts. But if I lived in Whyalla or Broken Hill I wouldn't want to see something second-best, and it's no more difficult to tour very good things than it is to tour something of lesser quality.

RG: It's the risk, isn't it, that an act of God might happen and you would lose it?

DMcN: It was like that in Townsville recently.

JM: Yes, and where was our show? In Townsville. But, it missed us, the cyclone.

DMcN: How do you see the role of a major state gallery in the collection of contemporary art. I don't think anybody would dispute that you have consistently supported the work of young and emerging artists. How do you perceive the obligations of major state galleries in respect of new work?

JM: I don't believe it's the job of a national gallery to encourage emerging talent at all. And the money that I've spent over the years has been money given by a cigarette company to spend on works by artists (in their own statement) 'at the cutting edge' of Australian art. Those works have been handed over, as it happened, to this gallery, and we are busy at the present time lending them out to institutions throughout the country which have nothing of this kind. National galleries reward excellence by representing artists who have shown their mettle, who have survived for six to ten years and look as if they will work on into the future.

DMcN: Then how would you characterise the separate functions of a major state gallery on the one hand and commercial galleries and alternative artists' spaces on the other?

JM: They are three parts of one scene. State galleries record the history of art, including recent history. The artists' spaces show you what's happening, often at a fairly dismal level of art quality. The commercial galleries exist to make a living for the artists, and they pick up the artists at the artists' space level and they pass them on to the national galleries in due course; though pitiful few commercial galleries in this country have ever actively supported artists out of the commission that they have made from selling art. Most keep the commission in order to support a life style as an art dealer. They put precious little back into promoting artists through publications or advertisements or ensuring inclusion in group shows in international exhibitions. Many of them are content to take the work through the front door and see it go out and bank their share of the sales.

DMcN: There are some notable exceptions, aren't there?

JM: Very few. If you look at the history of dealing over the past twenty years, in Australia, you find very few people who have made a contribution to an artist's career by supporting them. Many dealers struggle to make a living and are grateful to receive their commissions and then these people are very surprised when their artists leave them for somewhere where they are being given a better deal. So that there is another level in the Australian art world - those dealers who are supporting themselves by introducing artists to the public but don't do well enough to take their artists anywhere at all.

PT: You mentioned a tobacco company. What do you feel about sponsorship? Do you think that's been a generally good infusion of money and direction?

JM: Now that the Philip Morris Grant has

James Mollison, Australian ***magazine,*** *30/3/86*

come to its end in its old form I meet artists everywhere who tell me how sorry they are that this is so and they instance how important the first purchases from them by Philip Morris were - that those purchases helped to boost their morale because their work was bought and was shown widely. It also helped them with sales and in getting grants because not everybody got purchased for Philip Morris and there was some feeling in the art community that if they were there they were probably better than people who weren't there. Though I was always conscious of the fact that the Philip Morris Arts Grant probably only picked up half the artists of quality in the country anyway.

PT: Outside of Philip Morris, does sponsorship of major exhibitions worry you at all, the fact that so many galleries seem largely dependent upon sponsorship to mount important exhibitions?

JM: Exhibitions are now so costly to put together that if you don't have sponsorship you can forget your ambition to put that exhibition on. We have to admit that many companies prepared to sponsor exhibitions are companies that want to do something that adds to their reputation as good citizens and like their names to be associated with the arts because that brings a cachet of respectability - as perhaps it has always done from the days when art was made for palaces and churches through the times when art was consumed by tycoons, up to the present when corporations consume art in a number of different ways. If it's legal to accept money from a corporation I see no reason why the gallery should not accept the money. Cigarette sponsorship is now not allowed in Victoria. There is a levy on cigarette sales that goes into a government administered fund, and people point out to me that to them the distribution of that money seems much like pork barrelling. So that we have moved to exclude sponsorship from one group of people and favours are now being handed out by government agencies in a way that certainly annoys those who were previously sponsors themselves.

DMcN: That situation in Victoria is one you'll be walking into.

JM: And I will work with it down there. I am sure I can get money out of that fund. For good causes. That won't have to do with favours being given to this part or that part of the State of Victoria. It is perceived that favours are being done - I don't know whether they are or not.

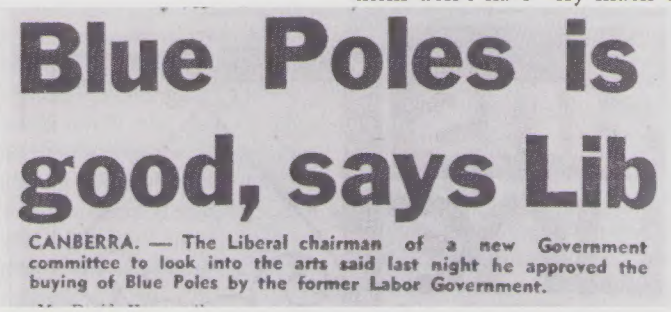
DMcN: There was an instance recently in Australia, of a show that was taken both by New South Wales and by Western Australia. *Art of the West* it was called, an American show. It was shown at the time of the America's Cup in the West. It was sponsored by United Technologies, which is a major American armament manufacturer. It was done at the time of the America's Cup. It was opened by the Defence Minister who was negotiating contracts with that Company at the time. It could be argued that the show contained within it a kind of ideology, the ideology of the 'wild west'. There was perhaps a slightly too intimate relationship between the nature of the sponsoring company and the works themselves and the moment of their exhibiting. Are there sponsors that you would refuse on grounds other than aesthetic grounds?

JM: Two answers. Nobody went to the show of the American West. It was a great flop. I don't believe because people registered that its sponsor was an armament manufacturer. I do have my black moments about any number of things. Since I have been here I have never answered a letter that hit my desk from anybody at all in South Africa. But it is legal to take the money and the sponsors are not asking any more than you are prepared to do in return for the money. I wouldn't say we are not going to take it. It is my job to put material before the public more than it is my job to be in the forefront of those who are saying smoking is bad or automobile fumes are bad for you, therefore we shouldn't accept any petrol sponsorship money.

DM: You know the controversy over Alan Bond, his involvement in Chile and his ownership of the telecom network there and yet your Gallery is going to put on an exhibition of six of the works from Alan Bond's collection. Was that an easy decision?

JM: A half-a-dozen members of the staff expressed their concern. I wasn't sympathetic, because of the good that I think it will do people having their horizons expanded by the first hand experience of, not just works of that quality, but by this and the other art galleries when their curiosity leads them to go to look at the Bond material.

DM: You would have been aware when you made that decision there would be protests about it. Was that a consideration?



Blue Poles is good, says Lib

CANBERRA. — The Liberal chairman of a new Government committee to look into the arts said last night he approved the buying of Blue Poles by the former Labor Government.

Sun *headline, 30/3/76*

JM: No. I didn't think there would be protests of any kind that would touch us.

DM: I know you once said to me (you were quoting the Salvation Army, I think) that there is no such thing as dirty money, only dirty causes. I certainly believe that if we have wealthy collectors with good works of art, no one should say they shouldn't be on public walls, but may be there are certain moments when there are issues greater than issues of aesthetics, that override them.

JM: You think then at present we should take all the Chinese objects off exhibition in galleries throughout the country? I don't think that by not showing the Bond pictures you are going to improve anything very much in Chile.

DM: But if you have someone undergoing a lot of pressure for their financial investments, and you show their works, whether you like it or not is giving them some form of cultural capital. So it isn't really identical is it? It becomes an intervention, whether you intend it or not.

JM: That is what sponsorship is. People don't give to you unless they are getting something back.

DM: So you think that whatever the price, it's worth paying it for the quality of the pieces?

JM: The great art made while the Inquisition was a power in Spain survived and now people's memory that there was an inquisition has paled to almost nothing.

DM: Would you consider taking a show of Chilean art produced by Chilean exiles?

JM: That would be great. If it was any good.

DM: Do you think that most gallery directors in Australia would agree with that?

JM: I can't answer for them. Most of them don't have very much experience directing galleries at present.

PT: A good deal of sponsorship has gone into so-called blockbusters. Do you think they have been a good factor?

JM: The general public love them. They love the experience of the big exhibition of works by a famous name. They enjoy the fact that they have to make an effort to get to it, that in some parts of the world they have to pre-book tickets for it, even months ahead. I've discovered through experience in New York that people will often meet for a meal and go to the gallery - they are not so much looking at the works of art as enjoying being part of the blockbuster experience, though it seems to me that the blockbusters are becoming much less enjoyable because as the costs have risen people have to count, as they did for the Georgia O'Keefe retrospective recently, on people moving past the pictures five deep the whole time the show was open. And only by accepting that situation could the museum see its way to paying for the expenses on the show. The Metropolitan when it put on its second Van Gogh exhibition - San Remy it would have been - was in a state of shock because not a single work had an insurance valuation of less than $5m. That's probably now the insurance valuation on a good drawing by Van Gogh. When I talked to the people at the Guggenheim about the possibility of 135 of the very finest things in their collection coming to Australia we began with an insurance value of $US700m, and the following week the May/June sales were held, unprecedented high prices were paid for works at those sales, and the Guggenheim realised that for the works in that exhibition to be properly covered for their replacement costs they would have to be insured for between $3bn - $4bn. The insurance on a $700m collection was $4m. The show was going to go to three venues throughout the world. So two things conspire against such exhibitions. One, the experience is no longer so attractive - on the last days of the showing of the early Cezanne pictures in Washington the gallery rooms in which the pictures were hung stunk of people, like a school room at the end of a hot day. The other is that the costs are so high.

DMcN: Does that suggest that we can expect a reversion to smaller, more intimate shows.

JM: The finest exhibition that I saw last May in the *The Figure in Early Greek Art* - fifty items, thirty of them small bronzes, terracottas, pots or sherds, each accompanied by an extended label, so that by the time you had taken in the messary that these small objects - easily transportable, not specially valuable objects - had to tell, you were prepared for the twenty major marbles in the exhibition. It was exhilarating. The material was of extraordinary quality and looked to me like an alternative to the huge shows that bring works from every part of the world. The proposed Guggenheim show was going to have twenty-five curators to courier the material to and from Australia. And I believe that galleries are going to have increasingly to mount exhibitions from their own collections, though unfortunately the banners hanging outside that say 'imported' bring in more people than banners that say 'from our own collection', and people represent money and the money keeps the wheels turning.

Correction In the first part of this interview in the August issue of *AM* on page 7 line 7 from top, 'having' should read 'Hoving' [then director of the Metropolitan Museum in New York].

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When is art academic? Notes on the 'new Academy'

ROGER BENJAMIN

Academy, Academic, Academism ... these words mean 'bad' in the conversations of the art community ... they are about as dirty as polysyllables can get.
Thomas B. Hess, 1963[1]

OVER THE LAST YEAR or so a number of commentators on contemporary art have claimed that we are witness to the arrival of a 'new Academy' on the local art scene. In a country whose modern movement faced a crisis with the founding of an Australian Academy of Art in the 1930s,[2] this news would be troubling were it not for the contradictory composition of this alleged Academy: artists like Imants Tillers, John Nixon, Mike Parr, Peter Tyndall, Jenny Watson, Bill Henson and perhaps Juan Davila. These are artists whose 'avant-garde' credentials were once considered irreproachable.[3] To claim they are 'academic' now might seem, if we follow Hess's dictum, to be a feat of rhetorical acrobatics designed to discredit the group in the eyes of the art public. This it partly is; yet in seeing how this slight has come into being, we might rescue something of substance for the analysis of contemporary art.

In the discourse on modernism the term 'academic'[4] has long been used pejoratively to designate artists or writers opposed to the innovation said to distinguish the avant-garde. This usage sprang up in 19th-century France, when to be of the Academy meant something much more precise than it does today. First, it meant affiliation to a specific institution, the Académie des Beaux-Arts, an élite college of thirty professors elected to membership of the Institut de France. The function of this Academy (as of all institutions founded on the model of Plato's school of philosophy in the gardens of *Akadémos* near Athens) was primarily to teach. The style which resulted from the curriculum taught at the State Ecole des Beaux-Arts (regulated by the Academy) is thus properly called an academic style. Its stasis and homogeneity was the result of the systematic imitation of fixed exemplars - Greek sculpture and the painting of Raphael, Poussin and David. Academic professors like Ingres, Cabanel or Gérome established an aesthetic hegemony both through their teaching and through the institution of the annual Salon, which for years was itself controlled by the Academy.

Dissent from the French Academy could be measured in various ways. Delacroix's progressivist aesthetic flouted academic precepts like the primacy of line over colour: thus he was long denied a chair at the Academy and never taught at the Ecole. He nevertheless received the major commissions for decorating State buildings in the mid-century. Delacroix might usefully be called an official, but not academic, artist.[5]

The Impressionists were in these senses neither official nor academic. Although they were trained within the academic system, they were not patronised by the State, and their innovative work was repressed by the Academy. Yet it could be argued that the domination of taste by the Impressionists eventually became so complete that they themselves came to comprise a kind of alternate Academy. That is this century's usage of the term: it extrapolates from the old Academy to any situation where a particular school is thoroughly entrenched, supplied with defenders, productive of students - in short in a position of power. A less prejudicial terminology would speak of how an erstwhile avant-garde movement is institutionalised - soundly integrated into those institutions which help define the field of art.

Competence in a number of such institutional areas is pertinent. The first is winning access to exhibition space, which carries with it a legitimising effect commensurate with the prestige of the exhibition concerned. The Impressionists established for themselves the alternative institution of an exhibition of artists in rebellion against the official Salon, whose authority they certainly eroded. A second measure of institutional recognition comes with the critical commentary of journalists, essayists, and eventually, historians. Impressionist art was from the first richly debated if not always endorsed, a fact which has ensured its dominant place in the written record of art history. A still more sure sign of institutionalisation is provided by an avant-garde's professional peers - numerous artists converted to the Impressionist cause and by the 1880s style in the official Salon itself was marked by fluid brushwork and a brighter palette. The Impressionists were not teachers as such, but the fact that they were imitated reminds one of the properly academic in that it implies the application of a procedure.

Finally there is the measure of art market performance. Claude Monet was becoming wealthy by the later 1880s, due in part to the inspired marketing strategies of the dealer Durand-Ruel. The question is, no matter how progressive an aesthetic may be, can its exponent fairly be called avant-garde if his work hangs on the walls of railroad magnates in Chicago? One can only answer 'yes' if the capacity of the bourgeoisie to appropriate the oppositional work of the avant-garde disengages the latter from responsibility for the fate of its productions. So by the late 19th century Claude Monet was an artist with a definite institutional pedigree, but for all that he could not be called an 'academic' artist, partly on account of the precise connotations of the term when the Academy was a living institution.

Despite the fact that no Academy proper has held sway in Australia (although there have been some influential art schools), the notions of the Academy and the academic still have considerable polemical potential. That is proof of how ingrained the modernist discourse (with its exaltation of innovation) remains in Australia.[6] Those artists now said to comprise a 'new Academy' have simply come to enjoy a measure of well-deserved institutional recognition, and that is what I suggest the critics, via a modernist rhetoric, are contesting.

Certainly critics have something to gain by so positioning themselves vis-à-vis an avant-garde they say is tiring. By the rhetorical strategy of bracketing off the 'new Academy', they claim a new critical space for themselves to occupy. That space is metaphorically in advance of the position of the artists (and their critical supporters) whose redundancy they are

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declaring. If it is not personally pleasing to be able to announce the decline of artists one has never liked, it is at least cool for a critic to have a new take on the old scene. To imply that Davila, Tillers or Tyndall are stagnating because of success is to clear a large space in the field of vanguard research here. New figures must be brought into this void, and we can expect the doom-sayers of 'academe' to people it with energetic young souls of their own nomination.

There is nothing new in the dynamic of critical and art-worldly territorialising as I have described it. For reasons closely tied to patterns of consumption within bourgeois society, cycles of generation, confirmation and decline in successive avant-gardes have structured the history of art (conventionally construed) in the modern period. The commentary of critics has ushered the schools in and out, at times acting to constitute a school as such, or fighting rearguard actions against the encroachments of new paradigms and their critical supporters. What we need to assess is whether the naming of a 'new Academy' in Australian art carries anything more than rhetorical wright. A name which fails to refer convincingly will not stand the test of time.

Si lumen phani veneris nullus ex
tinguere valet. quare absq; veneris
femine virgo non generaret. augus
tinus. xvi. de ciuitate dei capi. vij.

Peter Tyndall, detail A Person Looks At A Work Of Art/ someone looks at something ..., 1988, reproduced courtesy National Gallery of Victoria

First, we need an assessment of whether the institutional acceptance the group is said to enjoy is as tangible as is claimed. Second, we need an estimate of the ability of these artists to hold the attention of audiences for contemporary art, of their durability in the avant-garde posture. Finally, we need to know if, waiting in the wings, there are artists who can convincingly situate themselves in the space which the logic of critical succession implies will become vacant.

Not being able to read the future, we can only address the first of these points. Employing the marks of institutional standing used above for the Impressionists, we find today's group of artists are consolidating their positions. Most are in their late thirties - a fact which counts against them in the avant-gardist stakes. It is as protagonists of exhibitions, both commercial and official, that the artists have the strongest claim to institutional legitimacy. They have participated widely in group and solo shows and, more controversially, have been regularly privileged by the curators of official exhibitions representing the strength of Australian art at home and abroad. To a degree such exhibitions are our equivalent to Salon or Universal Exposition displays, and critics are right to judge that curators (and dealers) are moving towards the establishment of an 'official' avant-garde in that sense (Tillers, with his Venice and Centennial Park commissions, is our Delacroix). Yet the record of acquisitions by museums also bespeaks an official resistance to art apparently to acid for recuperation (I think of the shameful record for Davila in Canberra and Melbourne, or of Tyndall, so long barred from the National Gallery of Victoria).

Exhibitions generate criticism: for almost a decade the artists' work has received amply critical commentary, although in the intellectual and fashionable journals far more than in newspapers, and rarely in critically sustained form (much remains to be written, although good books on Davila and Tyndall have appeared). The lack of acceptance of their work by journalists is an indication that these artists have very little of the public recognition and understanding that characterised genuinely academic art in its time. These remain difficult artists, somewhat marginal even within the gilded ghetto of the visual arts in Australian culture.

Ideally, when discussing the market for such work one would distinguish whether pictures went into private, corporate, or institutional collections. But in terms of dollars returned to the artist, election to the 'new Academy' hardly assures its artist a decent living. Bouguereau and Gérome earned millions. As Mike Parr has declared with passion, the ascetic devotion of a John Nixon has long been repaid with penury. Only Davila and Tillers are now able to command and receive respectable sums for their large pictures, but their earnings remain moderate compared to those of older artists like Boyd or Nolan, let alone the biggest names on the international scene.

As indicated above, perhaps the best way to rule finally on the validity of claims for a 'new Academy' is to see whether its putative members have spawned a school.[7] For academic art is pre-eminently art which reproduces itself. It is very hard to find evidence for such a school amongst emerging Australian artists.[8] What is more apparent, in Melbourne at least, has been the continuing engagement of students with the painterly models of Peter Booth and John Walker, both until lately professors at the institution which most resembles an Academy here, the Victorian College of the Arts (or, as the Dawkins amalgamation madness is likely to make it, the future arts school of the University of Melbourne).[9]

The fact that the artists under consideration have not generated a school of stylists is related to the discrepancy of their own styles: their works look markedly unlike one another's, they do not offer that coherence which eases the work of

assimilation. Nevertheless, these works are rooted in a common practice of critical post-conceptualism. If they teach anything it is a way of analysis rather than a look.

The main engine for that analysis has been the quotational element so salient in the work of Nixon, Tillers, Tyndall and Davila. This is at once a quoting of self and a recombinative quoting of other artists' work. At this point an interesting parallel with genuine academic practice suggests itself. The academic tradition, exemplified by the schools of Bologna and Paris, was founded upon learning to manipulate the pictorial codes offered by certain exemplary artists. When the recombination was subsumed and melded in a formulation also expressive of the younger artist's temperament, the work cohered and was praised as learned. When it did not, it was criticised as merely eclectic. For academic artists tradition was there to be reworked, and hopefully equalled.

Critical post-modernism is also retrospective, but its reworking of pre-existent imagery takes place less in an atmosphere of reverence (although elements of nostalgia are certainly encountered) than of seeking to embody a consciousness of the operations of the visual as a communicative order. Hence its explicit employment of stylistic fragmentation, which is antithetical to the academic effort for synthesis of styles. One could say, however, that the post-modern artist too seeks to arrive at a formulation that is distinctive of his or her position - hence the recognisability of a Nixon or a Davila. In this sense the primacy of the individual (notwithstanding its contestation) is a factor linking academic, modern and post-modern art (with a resulting strain on these categories). The imitative element in the innovations of modern art has itself been underestimated - such art also employed quotation, while the extent of modern copying and stylistic masquerade has been suppressed by modernist historiographical prejudice.[10]

To so discuss the basis of quotation common to academic and post-modern art is not to accede to the postulation of a 'new Academy' by modernist critics. They tend to use the term to claim that the art in question has lost its capacity for productive reflection within the aesthetic. On the contrary, the above remarks are designed to suggest that only an expanded sense of history can help us see the richness that is in this work of continuing vitality.

[1] T.B. Hess, 'Some Academic Questions', in Hess and J. Ashberry (eds), Academic Art, London, 1971, p. 2.
[2] See R. Haese, *Rebels and Precursors,* Melbourne, 1981, Chapter 2.
[3] I cannot debate here whether artists whose work deals in repetition and quotation should be called avant-garde or not, but employ (despite Peter Bürger) the conventional sense of the term (see M. Rose, 'The Concept of the Avant-Garde: From the Modern to the Postmodern', *Agenda,* Vol. 1 No. 2, Special Supplement, pp. 23-24).
[4] Today we distinguish academic art from the Academy as such - the one denotes a style of rigid conformity to fixed procedures, the other an organisation such as might enforce that rule; each term usually implies the other.
[5] A distinction used in A. Boime, *The Academy and French painting in the Nineteenth Century,* London, 1971.
[6] The recent scholarly and commercial re-assessment of 19th-century academic painting has little to do with the present case; if it did, 'academic' would not be the dirty word it is for the critics.
[7] Elizabeth C. Baker applies this criterion to Minimal art in her excellent 1967 essay, 'Is there a New Academy?', in *Academic Art,* pp. 140-157.
[8] Unless it be in the emulation by some of the photographer Bill Henson's work.
[9] On the return to the academic practice of life drawing drawing in college curricula see T. Gott, *Backlash,* Melbourne, 1986, esp. pp. 31-31.
[10] See my 'Recovering Authors: the Modern Copy, Copy Exhibitions and Matisse', Art History, vol. 12, no 2, June 1989, pp.176-201.

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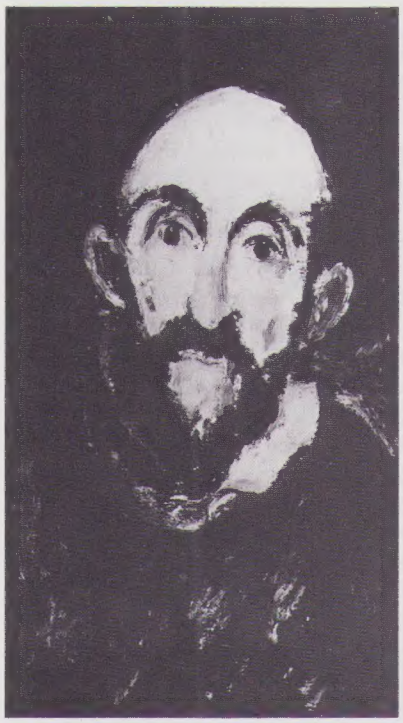

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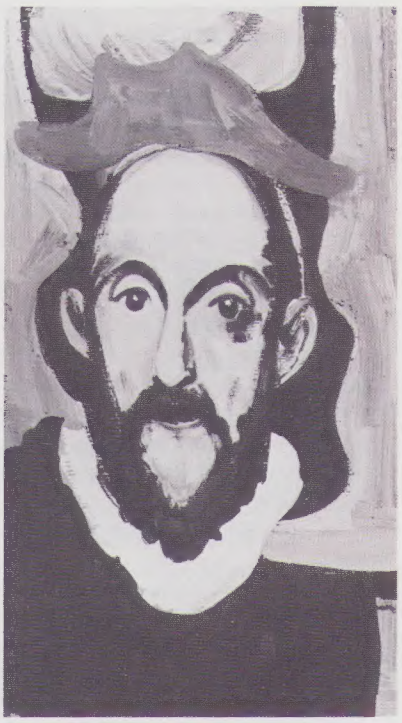

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Paint, pearls and swine:

Robert Hunter Paintings 1966-1988

JULIE EWINGTON

THE BEAUTY of Robert Hunter's paintings is universally acknowledged. What gives so much more trouble is the exact specification of that beauty. That question may be resolved now, at the moment of the artist's precocious retrospective, organised by Jenepher Duncan for the Monash University Gallery and now in an elegant, sparsely hung and-inevitably- reduced version in the glorious natural light of the Drill Hall Gallery in Canberra.

The exhibition is a model of its kind, a true retrospective rather than the wisdom of hindsight marshalled in support of the artist's current career, as some other recent essays in the genre have been. *Robert Hunter Paintings 1966-1988* encourages the long prospect view, an opportunity for reflection on the work of half a lifetime. It also involves a conundrum, an elegant proposition challenging usual expectations of the retrospective exhibition. How may one interpret a survey over a twenty-year period when the artist's work seems to have changed very little, untouched by personal or political events, equally indifferent to the 'passing' of Modernism and the advent of the postmodern era?

What does this retrospective glance reveal? From the revelation of the pastel early paintings to the intense luminosity of the last five years, the coherence of Robert Hunter's artistic practice is marked by gradual shifts in close attentive experimentation. One art critical convention directs the viewer to search out the common marks of an artist's handling within a diverse range of subject-matter; a complementary strategy suggests marking the recurrence of personal obsessions throughout the passage of stylistic shifts. Hunter's work defies both these strategies: none of the usual dichotomies between form and content may be invoked in his case. On the contrary, what has baffled critical analysis of Hunter's work has been precisely its continuity and consistency. For a history and criticism predicated on (rapid) evolutionary change is ill-equipped to conceptualise an art focussed at one set of intersecting co-ordinates and an artist who has found these consistently and continually fascinating.

Robert Hunter's practice involves a thorough commitment to the pursuit of one (relatively) tightly bounded set of problems and interests in non-representational, non-objective art. Actually, Hunter's interests are better described as an open-ended series. One work leads into another or alternatively suggests a different tack. I know of no in-principle refusal by the artist to consider new elements, such as differently shaped supports or the use of bolder colours. (These were briefly included as fine coloured strings applied to paintings in the early 1980s.) Nevertheless, Robert Hunter's paintings found something like their current direction in the late 1960s and twenty years later this journey has not been abandoned in favour of a different path.

Perhaps I had better describe Hunter's works, in the absence of illustrations. In any case, photographs of the work are notoriously unhelpful. There have been many variations over the years in their apparently rigorous geometrical schemes, but Robert Hunter's paintings have generally been characterised by a square or horizontal format, divided again into grids and sometimes again into triangles by the use of masking tape or applied strings so as to produce clean, crisp lines. (Arcs or circles may also appear as elements in the works.) This work is always impeccable in manufacture, the surfaces quite free of any marks of application, the layers of colour unmodulated. It is well known that Hunter has never deviated from his exploration of a chromatic range extending from most shades of white and cream to what resembles deepest charcoal grey. Early works, which were often square, were white, or white and cream; later works dealt in rich, dense greys; and the works of the 1980s have explored an extraordinary series of pearly, barely registered colours one would generally decribe as white, but which in fact consist of many layers of paint, some fine thin washes of colour.

Does this brief account present the work as stringent, frigid and formal? Successive writers have engaged with the question of Hunter's allegiance to Minimalism or debated his departure from it, most recently Charles Green in his imaginative catalogue essay for the Melbourne University Museum of Art show last May and, in authoritative detail, Alan Dodge in the catalogue for this exhibition.[1] Yet invoking a knowledge of art history to deal with Robert Hunter's work in one sense hinders the business of interpretation. I have been struck, in recent years, by the unsatisfactory ways in which the reception of Hunter's work has skirted around interpretation, clinging to the certainty of art historical identification. (This is a point Green makes with admirable clarity, only to defer once again the desired reading in favour of yet another discussion of Minimalism in Hunter's work.)

As Green and Dodge agree, Robert Hunter's attraction more than twenty years ago to the contemporary forms of American reductionist art is not the final word on the work. Rather it was the starting-point for a distinctively personal visual repetoire, developed along intuitive lines rather than adopting the characteristically systematic enterprise of Minimalist art. This work is serial only in the sense of constituting an on-going enterprise: Hunter hangs his paintings on the structure and style of Minimalist art, like a sculptor modelling clay into flesh on an iron armature.The substructure is necessary but significant only when subsumed into the final work. To quote Alan Dodge, 'Unlike the metal modules of Carl Andre's sculpture or the black pinstripe configurations of Frank Stella, Hunter's paintings are the record of the artist's intuitive development within a basic structure which is only slowly revealed under the viewer's contemplation.'[2]

At a further level of abstraction, Rosalind Krauss' remarks about the Modernist use of the grid and the relationship between tradition and innovation in art are pertinent to this discussion of Hunter's work. Speaking about Mondrian, Albers, Reinhardt and Agnes Martin she writes: '... in saying that the grid condemns these artists not to originality but to repetition, I am not suggesting a negative description of their work. I am trying instead to focus on a pair of terms -originality and repetition- and to look at their coupling unprejudicially; for within the instance we are examining, these two terms seem bound together in a kind of aesthetic economy, interdependent and mutually sustaining, although the one -originality- is the valorized term and the other -repetition or reduplication- is discredited.'[3]

This roping together of originality and repetition Kruass describes is central to undestanding Hunter's work. The grid in all its forms, and the late Modernist refusal of expressivity it offered, was one aspect of the art of The Field generation in Melbourne. In Hunter's case it offered a mapping of possibilities that was to endure.

Hunter's work differs from Minimalist art in another sense. The works are, obviously but also importantly, paintings, patiently crafted investigations in the visual realm. Particularly in the later work, and acknowledging that this retrospective

can scarcely command any of the vanished installation pieces of the past, Hunter makes paintings, not fabricated constructions bespoken by a conceptualist artist nor again self-contained objects artfully positioned by a minimalist sculptor. The material matters, in short, and so does the manner of its making.

For to understand Hunter's work it is essential to see it as process, as a deeply satisfying daily routine undertaken voluntarily for its great pleasure and interest. Such slow savouring of pleasure is unusual in contemporary life, nor is the repetitive aspect of the work process itself commonly thought of as a source of personal satisfaction. On the contrary. One must intuit this pleasure as one of the truths of the paintings. I cannot quote the artist to explicitly 'legitimate' this assertion, though in an early interview Hunter remarked that '... the process just became the most important thing, and the forms and colours...just were secondary to the process of making the things...'[4] and Charles Green quotes Hunter's more recent comment that 'his career had been like painting one house over and over', an activity by which, of course, Hunter had earned part of his living for some years. (One will hear if one listens.) Hunter's paintings do indeed testify to pleasure in process, to serious and refined pleasure taken in the minute and leisurely examination of the inter-relationships between certain components of painting, treated as a commitment to working and working on.

This is a procedure that is partly meditative in character - functionally meditative, that is. I do not suggest that Hunter's work springs from adherence to an explicit reflective régime but the works do offer visual analogues of meditative processes. Hunter's paintings offer me the pleasures of serene wanderings in broad open fields, in high bright plateaux where reflection suffers no temporal limitations. Close attention to the works reveals conceptual metaphors, more spatial than pictorial, prompting complex emotional responses. Significantly, even between paintings close in format and in time, one experiences sharply different responses. For instance, amongst the works shown at the conclusion of Hunter's residency at the University of Melbourne, in May, one format suggested a certain repetitive, rather incantatory inflection, an impulsion to speech or action that was for me uncomfortably ritualistic, even religious in emphasis. Close by, in every sense, other works were structured upon open, oscillating figures, offering rather more tolerant dualities. The response I gave these paintings had to do with a certain lyricism I found in them, rather than incantation. In the evolution of Hunter's works, the effect of similarity is to heighten difference.

Is there is any homology or continuity, any causal relationship to be found between the meditative experiences Hunter's paintings permit and the processes that bring them into being? The paintings carry within them the traces of their making, laid down in each successive layer of paint, in the best traditions of the old Melbourne art schools where students were encouraged to treat every day as a working day. Each of Hunter's works is the record of many hours and embodies the actions of the artist's body in making them. The panels Hunter has used in recent years, for instance, are not much wider than the outstretched reach of the artist's arms and in them lie the records of the moments, hours and days that go to make up each work.

Charles Green compares the Hunter paintings to looking into a mirror, a conceit I admire but do not see refected back from the works. I prefer another figure, one from the seas that Hunter's paintings recall for me in their constant shifts and unpredictable regularities. The mollusc- the oyster or the mussel, in Australian as in other waters- lays down successive layers of nacre to form a protective coating around any tiny irritant entering its casing. This work is time-consuming, disciplined and determined, an endlessly repeated process. Minute variations in the activity occur from time to time, causing the nacreous coating to take on a slightly different hue or to vary in thickness from one part to another. The structure of the pearl derives from the passage of light through these successive overlapping platelets of nacre, penetrating through to its now-invisible core and moving back out again to the surface, refracted and reflecting through an infinite series of infinitesimal moments. In time- and the process will continue unchecked for many years-a deep glowing lustre is achieved . In this iridescent lustre lies the great beauty of the pearl, that glow which is mysterious on account of the apparent autonomy of its origin within the core of a small spherical pebble. 'The Romans believed that no two pearls were exactly alike, thus they named them *unio* ('unique').[5] Difference, yet resemblance, is the key to the mysterious beauty of the daily work of the pearl.

What (if any) relationships exist between emotional states, impulses and ideas experienced by the artist in the process of making and the final appearance of the works? Are states of mind present at the working of the panels in any way transliterated into the successive layers of the works, trapped between them, as it were? Western expression theories accept the proposition that objects as complex in structure and fluctuating in meanings as paintings are intelligible partly through the interpretation of unconsciously executed aspects of their handlings. This being so, is one entitled to consider the possibility of deeply-embedded meanings in works as stringently 'unexpressive' as Robert Hunter's?

I am not sure that these meanings are entirely and irrefutably recoverable: no system of signs, subjects nor meaningful materials lends unqualified support to any particular interpretation. 'Signification' does not exist at the level of individual pictorial elements but in the process itself. What an unexpected luxury this provides: because of this semiotic uncertainty, Robert Hunter's works are peculiarly open to the desires of the viewer. The works are not merely cut and dried 'Minimalist' pieces , as if that were all that need be said. (In any case, Frank Stella's notorious comment from 1966, that 'What you see is what you see', quoted by Dodge, is either a deeply perverse utterance or mistakenly takes the subject of the sentence to be identical with himself.)

In fact, Hunter's paintings invite the viewer to explore the limits of perceptual response, requiring the exercise and thus the development of discrimination. The works act as very fields for individual scrutiny. Inevitably, in the process (different) subjective responses will be elicited. Over time, the experience of being with the work suggests new meanings, partially obliterates others, in a process complementary to the manner of their making. 'Fields for projection'... the phrase recalls environments where one experiences great expanses of relatively unmodulated colour, more or less free from incident, where one knows both constancy and continual change. Let me try a little mimetic theory on these works -they 'look like', suggest to me... the sea, the all-encompassing world that the water makes for the swimmer, the great expanses of an open windy sky full of light, the silent world of the longest downhill slopes of snow...at a further remove the works remind me of photographs of the lagoons of Kiribati, atolls so low in the Pacific that the sea meets the sky there, in great open domes like fish-eye lenses. All these places are sites for fascination with the mysterious principles of constancy in natural change. (The atolls of Kiribati have been called 'the isles of philosophy'.)[6]

Not that any of these readings have ever been suggested by the artist. But the business of interpretation is, finally, for each to decide for herself. The experience of such singularly meditative places resembles the effect of Hunter's work for me

: peace of mind, a sense of equilibrium, are the gifts both bestow. Hunters' paintings, like these places of suspended histories, work with the character of perception itself. This is why many of the works suggest not so much the question of identity, as Charles Green argues, but rather the provisional nature of personal subjectivity.The questions they pose do not concern 'Who am I?' but ' What am I?' or 'What am I doing?' If this seems a minute distinction, then let it stand as a tribute to the Hunter paintings that they set such philosophical speculations in train.

The Robert Hunter Retrospective is accompanied by an excellent catalogue, distinguished by Alan Dodge's intense, scholarly and yet enthusiastic essay, comprehensive research (I particularly enjoyed reading the reprinted early pieces by Ross Lansell) and by an exacting standard of overall attention to detail. The reproductions in the catalogue serve as visual mnemonics or as an injunction to see the exhibition, rather than as a memorial of the works included in it. It is a shame that the Hunter show will not be seen in Sydney. As with the recent retrospective of Hunter's teacher, Dale Hickey, which was effectively marginalised at the Manly Museum and Art Gallery, important Sydney venues currently seem uninterested in showing key figures in contemporary art from Melbourne.

Casting pearls before swine means 'offering a good thing to one incapable of appreciating it' (O.E.D.) As I remarked at the outset, there was never any question that Robert Hunter's paintings were admired. The burning question was why. These modest, restrained paintings, acting as propositions, are in truth oddly straightforward. How strange that objects so patently transparent should have been for so long treated as opaque.

[1] Charles Green, catalogue essay, 'Persistent Subjectivity; Revaluing Robert Hunter', Catalogue Essay for Hunter's University of Melbourne Residency exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, May, 1989 and Alan Dodge,' Robert Hunter and Minimal Art', catalogue essay for *Robert Hunter Paintings* 1966-1988, Monash University Gallery, 1989, pp. 15-40.
[2] Dodge, op. cit., p.37.
[3] Rosalind Krauss,'The Originality of the Avant-Garde' in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, M.I.T. Press, 1985, p.160
[4] Jenepher Duncan, op. cit., 'Robert Hunter Biography', p.75.
[5] Lois Sherr Dubin, *The History of Beads*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1987, p. 297.
[6] There is a sympathetic truth in Janice Hunter's recent photographs of the artist at the seaside in his scuba diving gear, published in *Tension*, June 1989, to accompany the reprint of Charles Green's catalogue essay.

COMMENTARIES

Sets and series; Robinson; Green

CHRISTOPHER HEATHCOTE

Melbourne

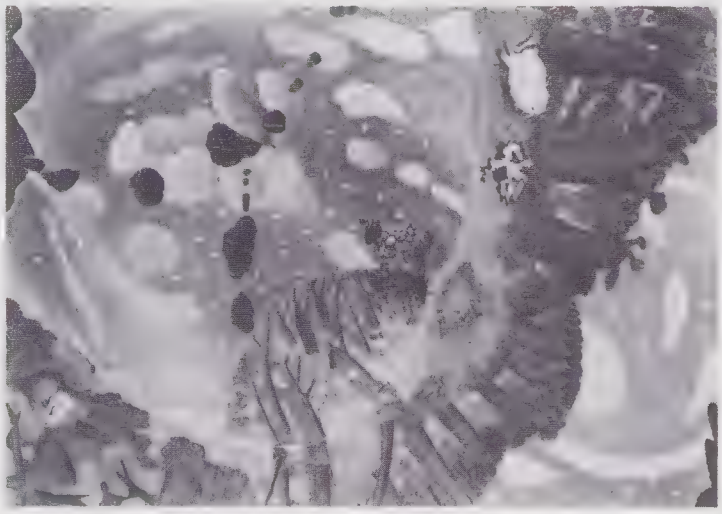
ONLY ONE thing is more irritating than seeing reputations being confused with standards, and that is seeing reputations being quite deliberately passed-off as standards. Whatever way you look at it fame, even modest repute, can be a thorough menace to artistic quality; a pernicious cancerous condition, it blurs the perceptive faculties and slowly paralyses the capacity for aesthetic judgement. Artists with a reputation can simply do no wrong in the eyes of adoring viewers, for like Midas anything the artist touches will (supposedly) be invested with the spirit of art. Meanwhile those who have not yet achieved public respect are thought to produce work of little if any merit. Of course arts reward systems have been and always will be geared to benefit those with reputations (and 'connections'?); after all, how is one to measure talent or creativity? Far easier to weigh artists according to their notoriety; besides, public esteem is the one thing that unimaginative (particularly bureaucratic) minds understand and appreciate. And so excellence becomes redundant - what matters is arts-media profile, the exclusiveness of an exhibition opening, and, most of all, the fat curriculum vitae.

Sets and Series, the National Gallery of Victoria's first contemporary print exhibition for several years, is a lesson on the problems that can arise when reputations pass as standards. Drawn mainly from the controversial *Aus Australian* (organised by Sydney Biennale's Rene Block), *The Bicentennial Print Folio* (selected by the Australian National Gallery's Roger Butler) and *The Bicentennial Collection* (arranged by Macquarie Galleries), one first notices that few printmakers have made it into this show. Most exhibitors are late arrivals to the medium having diversified into printmaking after being acclaimed in other fields (usually painting). Herein lies the key to the exhibition's success, or lack of it.

Sets and Series represents an eagerness on the part of the curator, the edition organisers and the artists themselves to develop an important, even epoch-making, anthology of contemporary prints. However like Block, Butler and Macquarie before her, NGV curator Irena Zdanowicz would assume that accomplished artists will automatically be good printmakers, that their glowing credentials guarantee an important show which sets a high level of artistic excellence. Unfortunately this is just not the case.

For their part the artists, in an urge to make a great show of things, effectively pastiche their own styles. Most flounder about attempting to be recognisable, to produce 'typical' Dunns, Shark-Lewitts, Firth-Smiths and so forth. Indeed too many make the fatal mistake of simply *transposing the superficial look* (rather than *translating the underlying idea*) of their principal medium across to the print, thereby managing to lose all hint of invention along the way. Trying desperately to reproduce themselves, their personal styles become a rigid constraint; and so they abandon the freedom of artistic creation for mere 'sign production', for the manufacture of objects which mimic the outward appearance of their *oeuvre* without partaking in its substantive meaning.

Strange to say nowhere is this more



William Robinson, Landscape with heavenly bodies

apparent than in the works of those artists who were already active in the medium. Take Mike Parr, who offers economy size mock-ups of his grand museum-scaled self-portraits. Flourishing all the mannerisms we expect of his works - as though following a recipe - they are certainly by Parr, but they are also rather tedious. (Indeed City Gallery has scheduled an exhibition of Parr's prints to coincide with *Sets and Series*; aside from a few early etched portraits, the superior works here have nothing to do with self-imagery, dealing instead with idyllic landscapes, naked women besporting themselves and totemic symbols). Likewise, John Nixon's silkscreens are drab imitations of his Non-Objective self-portraits. The absurdity is that Nixon's abstract etchings had begun to show promise, yet here Nixon devalues his *oeuvre,* transforming it into a reproductive cliché. Saddest of all Lloyd Rees's works are pale reflections of his late painting images, the delicate surprise that we expect of this most lyrical of colourists apparently being beyond the capacity of these flattened lithographic inks.

Sets and Series would have been an important exhibition if more attention had been paid to the images themselves and less to the notoriety of the artists (i.e. Zdanowicz edits out each of the less prestigious names from *The Bicentennial Print Folio*), fortunately the show is not a complete loss. There are important works from professional printmakers and from those few artists prepared to adapt to the medium. Foremost here are Tim Johnson, Robert Rooney (with what looked like one of his cryptic puzzles based on the cutouts from the back of a breakfast cereal packet), Bea Maddock, Ray Arnold, and Peter Tyndall, who steals the show. Venturing into linocut, Tyndall has contrived a witty series of pretend 15th-century German woodcuts illustrating various encounters between late-Medieval characters and fanciful pieces of architecture (which replicate the silhouette of the artist's trademark, a picture hanging from two wires). Each image is a delightful piece of stylistic archeology in its own right, with wonky attempts at foreshortening, the stylised hook-and-line folds of the draperies, grubby misprints in the Latin-type, etc. Such work is not to be ignored.

Nothing could be further from the official froth of contemporary culture than Charles Green's *Sea of Troubles* at Pinacotheca, and William Robinson's works at the new John Buckley Gallery. While the artists have their differences they share an abiding interest in the landscape format, and so are probably considered *retardaire* in the current hierarchy of styles (you won't find either artist in curated shows with sexy avant-garde titles). Both shows have their off moments, three or four of Green's works are awkward and gluggy, and Robinson's drawings are best forgotten, but the major pieces more then make up for these. While I'm reluctant to fall for binary oppositions there is something about the idea that summarises the relationship between these displays.

Green paints purgatory; a place of ominous waiting poised between two states of living. Perhaps the aesthetic is Australian Gothic for one has the sense of still being on this continent as one's eye is driven up the canvas at a perilously sharp angle, or slowly pushed toward a threatening pit, or thrown out into swirls of Oriental mist. Things materialise here without cause: in *Gnostic Wars* a skinny vine of light descends from the heavens, or maybe it spurts up from hell instead, in either case we can't conclude whether it's a punishment or blessing. Green's main motif - exemplified in *Desire* - is a cluttered and claustrophobic vista in which you're not sure if the rocks are rocks, for they could be throbbing chimneys, or rows of grinding factories, or fractured obelisks, or even the visual pandemonium of inner-suburbia. These are big, busy, disorienting paintings, a flurry of apparent activity in which 'nothing' is in the act of happening - Prometheus is probably enchained to his rock just over that rise, and Vladimir may be squabbling with Estragon away to the left.

Robinson, on the other extreme, drops us into cutie bushscapes, a vision of Aussie Eden with chooks and old cows moochin' about, and kangas and cockys picking at the squiggly bark, and bloody wondrous stars twinkling overhead. In the middle we find an Adam and his Eve (crowned with akubras) boiling a billy over mallee embers. Many, I dare say, would have little time for these works, although there is more to Robinson's unblemished kitsch than today's ideologically alert viewer might first appreciate. The trick is to apply a little Foucault, considering whether in this case the significance of the communication isn't found in the represented, but in the *mode of representation* (or, as Lacan might put it, between the report of the image and its apparent content stands the pictorial protocol in which that report is coded).

So how does Robinson represent? Unlike the naive artist he does not paint exactly and unselectively, quite the reverse. Robinson seems to set himself a complex problem: he uses design to articulate the boundaries of one's own space, of his personal (experienced) territory, hence works like *Bush Landscape with Sunbeams* have the environment curve around and enclose the painter's figure, becoming part-map and part-clothing. But design also involves the selection and ordering of elements in accordance with a set of moral priorities. The bizarre topography and perspective (which somehow recalls Ambroggio Lorenzetti's *City of Good Government*) is not the result of unfettered vision but of his adopting a semi-Platonic framework; nothing is seen directly, instead this world is apprehended as if reflected off a convex mirror, or more likely, via a puddle of water. In the challenging *Landscape with Heavenly Bodies* we therefore witness reflections of reflections, the mere images of images. And as for those recurring schematic stars and his bold dazzling sun (what Derrideans would identify as the *Heliotrope*), in these Robinson would have us recognise the heavily-loaded symbols of pure good.

Green's mode of representation should similarly be mentioned, for this artist doesn't actually paint his images - he paints the area surrounding them. Each rocky shape is really an emptiness, a pregnant gap in the fabric of paint, a figure that is *not* represented. Despite all the busyness and activity, things themselves are transparent and inconsequential; they are, in short, inexplicably non-things. What we cannot paint about we must pass over in silence.

Sets and Series: Contemporary Australian Prints was at National Gallery of Victoria, 29 June -20 August.
Charles Green: Sea of Troubles was at Pinacotheca, 26 July-12 August.
William Robinson was at John Buckley Fine Art, 27 July to 15 August.

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Parr and Rrap

JACQUES DELARUELLE

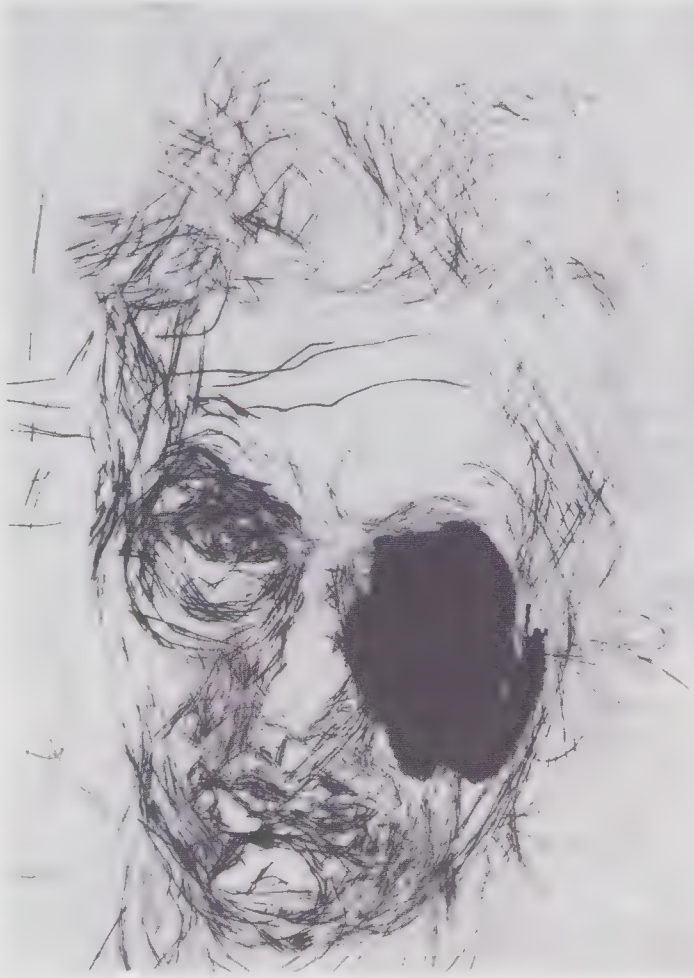
Sydney

Brutal policy,
like inferior art, knows
whose fault it all is.[1]

FOR REASONS which have probably less to do with the veracity of the above poem than with a complete deafness to the evidence that 'as a political weapon art in this century has proven almost entirely ineffective',[2] official art opinion has traditionally been very much on guard against political content. Any reference to the proximity of social reality tended to make life less comfortable for the connoisseurs or the aesthetes who used to stand at the top of the art hierarchy. But as one considers the unanimity with which well-exposed artists, the coolest dealers and the avant-garde curators now welcome political content, such a reticence appears to have been overcome. In fact, it would seem that political content has become the least equivocal sign of one's allegiance to a game that has lost most of its vitality at the same time as it has lost its rapport with real politics. As the argument about 'quality' in the arts is replaced by the spectacular display of one's semiological awareness, a new orthodoxy imposes its rule with the most confident authority. Its legitimacy derives from an alleged expertise in demystifying appearances. Yet, the 'critique' produced under its aegis demands blind acceptance of the way in which each artist manages to establish his or her difference within universal conformity. Idiosyncratic gestures are woven into fragments of philosophical narrative and the most extraordinary compliance is expected from the viewers of baroque metaphors whose most manifest intention is to be read as theory. Indeed it is harder and harder to resist the thought that it is the dominance of 'theory' and consequent demise of 'common sense' which has produced the situation where power can be (and therefore is) exerted in the name of its critique and the deconstruction of appearances coincides with a multiplication of new mirages.[3]

Hence the necessity to distinguish between real politics and the spectacles of political opposition in which so many inhabitants of the artworld indulge at present. Confronted with such a collective delusion, it matters to remember what separates true from false consciousness, and the meaning of the word ideology.

> Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously indeed but with a false consciousness. The real motive impelling him remains unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all.[4]



Mike Parr, from the series 12 Untitled self portraits, 1989

Quite apart from its claim to political efficiency, one of the main reasons why radical art belongs so readily to the sphere of false consciousness is that it deliberately ignores the conditions of its reception. The consequence of this neglect is a separateness of contemporary art from the public sphere belying its revolutionary pretense. Revolutionary art to be found in either public or private galleries is only revolutionary for the gallery. In the absence of a genuine avant-garde, that is in the absence of a revolutionary movement, radical art can be nothing but a parody of the artistic gestures which accompanied, or heralded the social struggles of yesteryear. Certainly art is affected by the existing political order, but this influence does not flow the other way. When, more than half a century after art was effectively severed from politics, radical artistic commitment is enthusiastically endorsed by official art opinion, one cannot help feeling a little cynical, to say the very least.[5]

An exemplary instance of art-world politics featured on a recent cover of Art *Monthly* (No 22). Beneath the photographic depiction of the event, one read the sibylline sentence: 'artists bury their heads to increase our perception ...' So it would seem! For if it goes without saying that the logging of rain forests is ecological vandalism, what requires some explanation is the way in which such an artistic performance as depicted in those very pages could possibly 'increase our perception', or further the interest of the ecological cause. Why should people involved in the making of objects or gestures possibly endowed with artistic quality, yet largely exterior to the main symbolic order of society, be entitled to believe that their artistic personae may transcend their duties as individuals or as citizens? Can artists really be considered as super-citizens, or individuals whose humanity is so very representative of humanity in general, that whenever they paint or act, they do so on behalf of all non-artists in the midst of whom they live. Couldn't it be expected that the myth according to which the life of artists is their art would be deflated, when authorship is so frequently denounced as a bourgeois fallacy. Apparently not, for in the case of the collective performance under discussion, the work of the artists was most definitely their political stance. Their conviction, it was implied, had a greater resonance than that of ordinary people. Not because it was more forcefully expressed, or because they had been bold enough to stick their noses in the ground and their rear ends up in the air, but more fundamentally, because of their belonging, as artists, to another ontological category.

Further, can such a *performance* con-

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vey one's outrage more efficiently than the demonstration of individuals who renounce their uniqueness as individuals to disappear in the common will that lies at the root of all political movements? Can one really protest against deforestation as an artist, rather than as a man or as a woman who happens to be concerned by the future of the country where he or she lives? It was not only the blatant immodesty of those self-appointed public figures and of their 20 metre-long-banner which was embarrassing, but also the way in which they were subsequently portrayed by the mass media. To be sure painters or performance artists can hardly pretend to the fame of rock stars. All the better, one could assume, in that they do not have to bow to the dictates of the showbiz. But such an expectation fades as one reads John Coburn's prose: 'Our performance piece was most impressive and effective in that it appeared on all the TV media that evening and in the newspapers the next day'.[6] Isn't that great! Too bad that such candid craving to be recognized as artists with an important message for all translated on screens in such an ironic way. By performing a strange 'primitive' ritual which mostly makes sense in reference to Beuys's own conception of the artist's shamanistic role, our 'artists in the forest' showed how close their own situation was to that of the threatened rain forests. The 'resonant overtones' whose efficiency Mike Parr would not doubt, were nothing but the connotations of the performance; connotations which suggested that, while demonstrating their solidarity with the trees, the artists showed themselves to be members of another species on its way to extinction. Better protected than trees in the few reserved enclaves granted to them by political authority, but depending on the fictions which they themselves perpetuate, artists who forget that politics is the business of all citizens and not an artistic - be it the ostrich - pose, contribute, even in a small scale, to the prominence of political kitsch.

But this analogy between the situation of trees and that of artists took on a much richer meaning at the Roslyn Oxley Gallery where Mike Parr's recent work was exhibited. For on this occasion, social reality does not disappear behind a collective artistic pronouncement, but on the contrary is most forcefully conjured up by art. What appears, almost at first sight, in this dazzling display of graphic eloquence, is that the most irrefutable subject of artistic expression is the artist's own predicament. In the absence of a pictorial tradition, or of a commonly intelligible language which would allow for a re-presentation of exterior reality, visual artists are literally trapped within the limits of their own subjectivity. Generally the awareness of this historical impasse materialises in an abandonment of representation. Salvation is found in abstraction, conceptual art, or again in the playfulness of the so-called rhetoric of appropriation. But Mike Parr has opted for a more exigent solution. To Beckett's formidable description of art as 'the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express ...', he dares oppose the anarchic necessity of his bodily existence. Each work literally grapples with the difficulty and the obligation Beckett had in mind when making his statement. But while doing so, it also sends the viewers back to their own conformism and apathy. Identity, or the fact of being riveted to one's own history as to one's skin and to one's own appearances, becomes a theme whose violence goes well beyond the immediacy of habitual expressionist clichés.

So forcefully is the plight of individual consciousness evoked, that private experience acquires henceforth a kind of universality. By refusing all ready-made sem-

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blances save his own, Parr attains to genuine originality. Certainly the artist has predecessors in the history of painting, and his work may be described as reminiscent of Lucian Freud, Miro, Artaud, Schiele, Goya and even Rembrandt. But such a prestigious lineage does not allow for facile quotations. Beyond the obsessive manner in which the artist makes use of his own traits to conjure up a physiognomy of the mind, the viewer can discern the attempt to make sense outside linguistic conventions. The infinite variation on the theme of the self-portrait testifies both to the impossibility and the need to evade present cultural autism. In such work as *Opic Iland,* the most basic units of Parr's artistic idiom can be recognized: the features of his own face, the square which frames it, an iconic reference to the laws of perspective and other gestures. But the main thing is that all these units are combined in works which, although they belong to 'the territory of the self' ('Opic Iland'), reach exterior sensibilities. There is an ideogrammatic quality in these aquatints and drypoints which makes the viewer search beyond what, at first glance, may have seemed like a desperate muteness. Yet in spite of the expressiveness of the lines and marks of which it is made, the language of the face encounters the impossibility of expanding beyond expression towards elocution. The units of Parr's idiom do not communicate with each other on a continuous basis. Moments are mapped in the metamorphoses of the artist's face, but instead of developing through time, Mike Parr's images pertain to an immobility which is symptomatic of the present cultural crisis. The synchronic aspect of his juxtapositions of these self-portraits makes the subjective-objective distinction break down into a single category of self-reflexiveness. Reporting upon itself, the consciousness remembers its multiple states, and in so doing, portrays the discontinuous nature of the mind or the sovereignty of the unconscious. In each work, things happen simultaneously and grasp a moment of being in its total significance. No causal link comes to explain and therefore to redeem the givenness of each stare and facial expression. Instead the absurdity inherent in the most fundamental human convention, namely identity, materializes and makes the viewers recognize their own fate in this multi-faceted self-portrait.

In contrast to Mike Parr's convulsive stiffness, Julie Brown-Rrap's discursive installation at the Mori Gallery displayed the sovereign calm of whomever is assured of remaining forever identical to himself. There was another sort of stillness. The hieratic confidence of semiological expertise and the knowledge of whose fault it all is. No trembling, no fear, no passion came to disrupt this *theory of games* where the ghostly wit of Marcel Duchamp was one more time required to repeat its challenge. *Noblesse oblige,* or rather chronology, the first move was his on the chessboard to be found on the floor of the gallery. Hung upside-down, his photograph faced that of the artist (also upside-down) and there could be no doubt as to the identity of the protagonists of this game with theory. As opposed to Mike Parr's historical *tabula rasa*, Julie Brown-Rrap situates her own activity in the wake of the modernist tradition. Yet, although she has enlisted the help of more theorists than I could name to signify the more recent developments of contemporary art, Duchamp remains the tutelary authority. It is in relation to his paradigmatic achievements that the pertinence of Brown-Rrap's own moves can be assessed. Unfortunately space won't allow for a detailed discussion of this 'face to face'. Suffice it to say that in view of Duchamp's own disparagement of the material aspect of art, Julie Brown-Rrap's objects were uncannily sleek and evoked a less than original stylisation of the old iconoclast's ideas. As a friend of mine - he would prefer to remain unnamed - wryly noticed: 'When an amateur plays with a master he almost certainly faces defeat.' But then again, they may not have been playing the same game.

[1] Les A. Murray, 'Politics and Art', *Sydney Review*, July 1989, p. 16.
[2] Rosenberg H., 'Art and Other Serious Matters', in *Art and Political Consciousness*, Uni. of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 295.
[3] May the ashes of Roland Barthes forgive the sacrilegious words!
[4] Engels, 'Letters to Merhing, 1893', quoted in Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, Fontana, 1983, p. 155.
[5] The split between radical art and radical politics is generally considered as dating from the late twenties, when Soviet authorities outlawed the art whose aim was 'to revolutionise the visual forms of things' (H Rosenberg).
[6] John Coburn,'Artists in e Forest', *Art Monthly* 22, inside front cover.

Mike Parr was at Roslyn Oxley until 15 July; **Julie Brown Rrap** was at Mori Gallery until 8 July.

Faith sustained

Martyn Jolly

In 1959, after several years on the road, the Museum of Modern Art's blockbuster photography show *The Family of Man* finally reached Sydney. It inspired at least one Australian, John Williams, to take up photography. Thirty years later his first retrospective is on at the AGNSW, accompanied by a generously illustrated catalogue.

In *The Family of Man* Williams found both a fully fledged role model and a fully formed visual language. The show's star, Henri Cartier-Bresson, offered him the persona of the street photographer: a furtive, peripatetic figure attuned to the hidden choreography of twentieth century street life. Its valorization of photographic truth gave him a sustaining faith in the unembellished photograph as a personal document of a particular social reality.

However, Williams never took on the rest of the ideological baggage that arrived with *The Family of Man* - its saccharine humanism and deliberate ahistoricism, for instance. This circumspection in the midst of enthusiasm became characteristic of his career.

Working in almost complete isolation he began to photograph on Australia's streets. His early 'character studies' have a monumental stolidity and a polite beneficence which was soon to desert his work entirely. In 1965 he joins the exodus from Australia's sterility and heads for Europe via the Middle East. There he takes an almost touristic delight in the richly encrusted, historically redolent streetscapes inhabited by seemingly ageless burghers. However he feels no more at home on these streets than he did on Australia's. But although cast adrift, he is learning to recognise the cultural co-ordinates with which to locate himself within an enlarged, world history.

Forced to return to Australia in 1969 he switches cameras from the handsome classicism of the square format to the fast cut of the 35mm rectangle. His prints lose their fine-grained civility and become hard, hot and gritty - 'which is just what Sydney is like,' he says. He quickly becomes angry and alienated from the Australian ethos. His earlier 'character studies' mutate into bitter social indictments. His former exotic

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backdrops are transformed into disorientating mazes of concrete and chrome, glint and glare.

Although this hostility tends to isolate him from the Whitlam era's neo-nationalists, it also, ironically, provides him with the necessary co-ordinates to realign himself within his hemispheric dislocation. In the mid-1970s he takes this vision back overseas to the USA and Europe. He now photographs a globalised, late twentieth-century urban landscape built from overlapping, reflective surfaces and populated by dismembered, anonymous figures.

John Williams, The Rocks, Sydney, 1973

But once more Williams pulls back from the easy excesses offered by this genre of photography. His fellow Australian street photographers - Philip Quirk or Roger Scott, for instance - show a similar acerbity bordering on misanthropy. But they suffer from a weakness for gratuitous visual puns which defuse a critical social vision. In the other direction the dead end of mere formalism also beckoned. Williams's essential commitment to the documentary tradition saves him from both these trivial fates most of the time. He is more interested in mapping his world than reinventing it.

Perhaps in response to emerging critiques of the tradition of photo-reportage Williams put street photography, as it had been classically formulated, to one side in the late 1970s. After experimenting with electronic flash he develops two systems of panoramic photography which he applies to a diversity of subjects throughout the 1980s. In its mathematical predetermination the panorama is diametrically opposed to the significant spontaneity of the street photograph. But it allowed Williams's other interests - languages, history and literature - to be directly incorporated into his work.

For instance, in one series of panoramas he investigates his own family history in relation to Australian history, in relation to the inexorable flow of time. He builds a panorama of a Sydney streetscape out from either side of an old family snapshot taken from the same spot anything up to fifty years previously. The effect of this temporal trigonometry is at once ghostly and fascinating. But this technique is consistent with the rest of Williams's career: he is attempting to survey a historical, geographical and personal space from a position which is cast adrift within it.

Until now the histories of Australian photography have included Williams as much as a writer/teacher - and a key player in the seventies 'photography boom' - as an artist in his own right. In the oeuvral biography of this retrospective we are at last able to evaluate his various projects in relation to each other. We are also able to evaluate the AGNSW's first moves into the writing of recent Australian photographic history. Williams's work has been clearly tailored to economically sketch out the major shifts in Australian art photography from the 1960s to the 1980s. In the end, though, the viewer's strongest impressions are of the changes to Australia's social landscape over the same period.

John Williams: Photographs, Art Gallery of New South Wales, until 1 October.

Aldo Iacobelli: recent works

Adrian Weston

Adelaide

It is four years since Aldo Iacobelli graduated from the South Australian School of Art. In that brief time, he has exhibited continuously. Iacobelli has begun to branch out from his local base with an Australia Council residency in Townsville, a certificate of excellence from the New York International Art Competition and most recently a survey show of his paintings, drawings and sculpture at Melbourne's Deutscher Gertrude Street Gallery.

This has afforded the South Australian art viewing public the rare opportunity to watch the unbroken genesis of the work of an artist who appears to be coming to some kind of prominence. It makes it possible to be aware of Iacobelli's art in terms of an *oeuvre*, something which is not usually possible until much later in an artist's career when a retrospective or monograph might come about.

In the case of Iacobelli, this opportunity is particularly apt. Iacobelli is an artist whose work shows the stages of development particularly clearly: there is a very strong sense of each painting, every drawing being an accountable step in the process of his development.

The pattern of development in Iacobelli's work which has been revealed through this constant exhibiting has had several strong constants which have tempered the course. Iacobelli has maintained a certain almost monumental approach to his symbolism. Thus there have been relentless pillars, columns and chimneys as well as gun barrels and cannon balls, in his earlier works. These were blatant and unavoidable images (yet retaining a graphic subtlety). This type of approach has transferred recently into less threatening images: a fish skeleton, a clock, a child's toy ball.

The other constant has been the persisting irony in Iacobelli's handling of the subject matter, which is why it is possible for him to be blatant but simultaneously to

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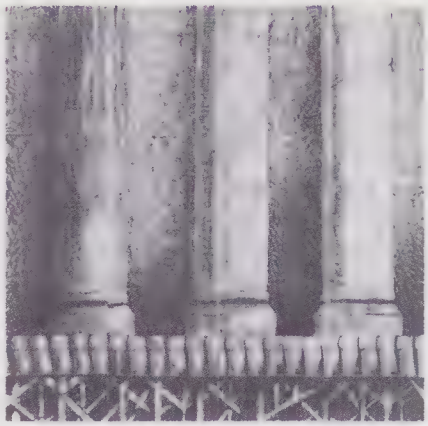
display a gentle and complex humour. The end result is that where there is a threatening element in Iacobelli's works it will be in the clouds or the looming child's toy rather than in the released bullet or the poised gun barrel.

In his 1988 exhibition at Anima Gallery it seemed that the elements of Iacobelli's work were beginning to be fully resolved: the imagery of his large canvases became denser with a far broader frame of reference than in his previous exhibitions. *Il Pentimento,* a vast gold device, borne heavenwards by three cherubs, with a lavish faux-Renaissance highlight and shading, and a vast disembodied heart *Cuore*, take on concepts of possession and identity and at the same time baffle the eye and the mind: they are passionate works.

The recent works fulfil much of the promise of Iacobelli's work to date in that they seem a synthesis of the style and ideas of his previous work and bring it closer still to resolution. The work comprises six panels, which make up three still lives. The scale is again monumental. the works seem to take off from their immediate predecessors as they have the same lush colouring and full brushwork and the subject of the still lives is compositions of massed, magnified bejewelled objects. However only three of the panels take this



Aldo Iacobelli, Fractured columns, 1986

form: the other three, which partner the former three, are purely rendered in white. But any hint of minimalism in this is only illusory, as in much of Iacobelli's painting; the white panels are exact reproductions of the coloured panels except for the absence of colour ... the subject of the painting is only discernible texturally and vastly altered by the slightest change to the lighting.

It might appear that these recent paintings have taken the element of the object and the concept of value and Iacobelli is able. Here is a resolution of his previous concerns. But the white panels have already begun the process of leading the works into another area of concern; aesthetic and conceptual.

The other aspect of Aldo Iacobelli's work which has undergone change is his technique. The immediate strength of Iacobelli's work has been his graphic skill. Consequently his drawings have been the most rewarding of his works with a virtuosity about them. In his paintings, Iacobelli has experimented more sometimes with mixed results. His 1987 solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Centre saw him bringing his brushwork closer to the marks of a graphite stick - leaving the works superficially beautiful but with a lot less depth. In his 1988 exhibition at Anima Gallery there was a return to a fuller more romantic brushwork which has been likened to Mandy Martin's.[1] this style of work, as seen in *Il Pentimento*, was particularly successful.

In the new works, the romantic and rich handling of paint continues and the feeling is that Iacobelli is at last beginning to match the graphic skills of his drawings in his paintings. There is only one moment of compositional large still lives where an iridescent gem initiates a sense of instability to the canvas. But it is only one moment in the series. The other two still lives, one with a mandalic, half circle of

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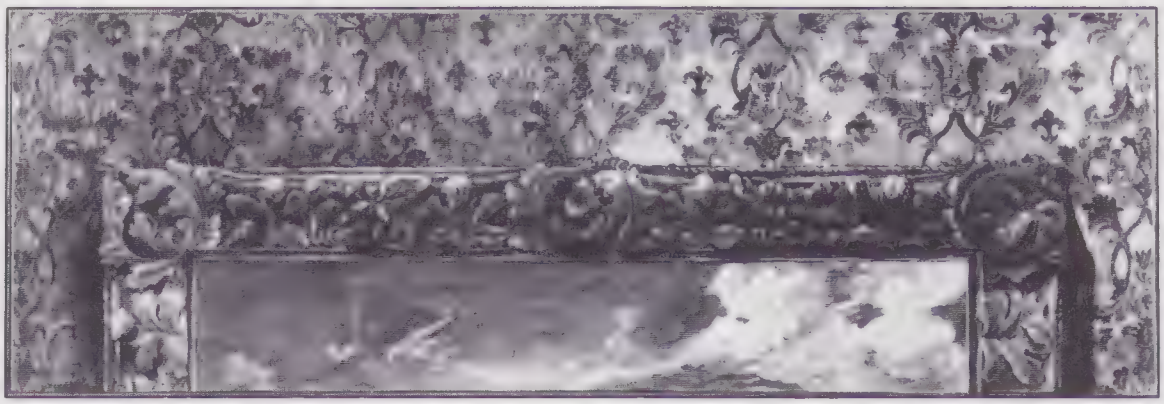

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gold holding the centre of the canvas, and the other with an impenetrable surface of entwined gold chains, have strength and certainty in their execution. It might be that their tightness carries the third and less successful panel, but overall they present a cohesive and effective front.

To make predictions about the possible future of an artist's work is foolish, but if Iacobelli continues to engage seriously with his work, it has to be promising.

[1] Margo Osborne, *Broadsheet*, October 1986

Aldo Iacobelli was at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia , 9 July - 1 August.

Esther Mahlangu, Yuendumu and Richard Long installation, 1989

Conjurations

Deke Dusinberre

Paris

One of the most eagerly anticipated exhibitions in recent memory finally opened at both the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Grande Halle La Villette in Paris on 18 May. Anticipation stemmed from three factors: the scope of the show, the time and energy that went into organizing it, and its announced goal of somehow eclipsing modernist discourse. Titled *Magicians of the Earth,* it is billed as 'the first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art' ('worldwide' being expressly chosen over 'international' which, it is accurately pointed out, too often refers to Europe and North America only). One hundred artists from all over the planet are on show, roughly half considered 'western' and the other half 'non-western,' styles and traditions being thoroughly mixed throughout the two large exhibition sites.

The selection process lasted for more than four years, and was the responsibility of a committee comprising Jean-Hubert Martin (currently director of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris), Mark Francis (former director of the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh), Jan Debbaut (Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven), and Jean-Louis Maubant (Nouveau Musée de Lyon-Villeurbanne). Martin and Francis were the administrative curators of the show. In search of 'contemporary art' of all kinds, particularly the unknown, they roamed the four corners of the earth, seeking to constitute a community - however loose - from among the diverse artificers which they have dubbed 'magicians'. Those elected include familiar names (Baldessari, Buren, Clemente, Haacke, Keifer, Long, Oldenburg, etc) less familiar names (Camara from Senegal, Meireles from Brazil, Chukwekulu from Nigeria), and anonymous community art (Yuendumu, Australia). As might be expected from such an ambitious undertaking, the show is strikingly varied (a Nam June Paik video sculpture, voodoo earth drawings) and dauntingly vast.

The exhibition's audacity and exoticness has won positive reviews from the general press; its promise to loosen some of the shackles of modernism is what drew the attention of the specialised press. The curators proposed to resist a modernist reading of art by exhibiting everything on an equal footing, offering no contextualization or art historical justification for specific choices. Visitors, in effect, are given almost no background on the 'meaning' of the various works. This policy provoked scepticism on the part of certain critics, notably Guy Scarpetta in *Art Press* who raised pertinent questions about the different reasons (and hence different results) for displacing art from its local context.

One of the curators' patent reasons for such displacement is to reinvigorate western artistic practice by reversing the historical tendency to appreciate 'primitivism in modern art', suggesting that we look instead for 'modernist influence on primitive art'. The point of this, to judge from articles in the exhibition catalogue, appears to be twofold: first, to renew our jaded vision of art, and second, to elevate non-western art from an 'accessory' role to that of fully-fledged partner to western art.

Mark Francis' catalogue essay is an account of his personal quest, in search not only of art but also of a way out of 'the closed circles of discourse' which render 'late modernist art ... impenetrably esoteric'. Francis typifies the curators' approach to this show when he stands intellectual principles on their head and argues that art 'has the right to be *misunderstood.*' This becomes the rallying cry for a curatorial policy in which art is supposed to speak for itself, in which works are *not* displayed so as to suggest formal links, in which heterogeneity assumes a positive value. Francis makes a plea for a gut-level reaction to art, calling for spontaneity and openness on the part of the beholder. In the context of the often heavily pedagogical approach of the Pompidou Centre, this comes as a refreshing change.

But it doesn't provide any protection from the ever-present danger of self-indulgence (critical and/or curatorial). With no explicit criteria other than unreflective response to the art itself, the potential interest of the objects on display (not to mention their selection and presentation) becomes a highly aleatory affair. Eclecticism can all-too-easily sink into a soft, intercultural mush.

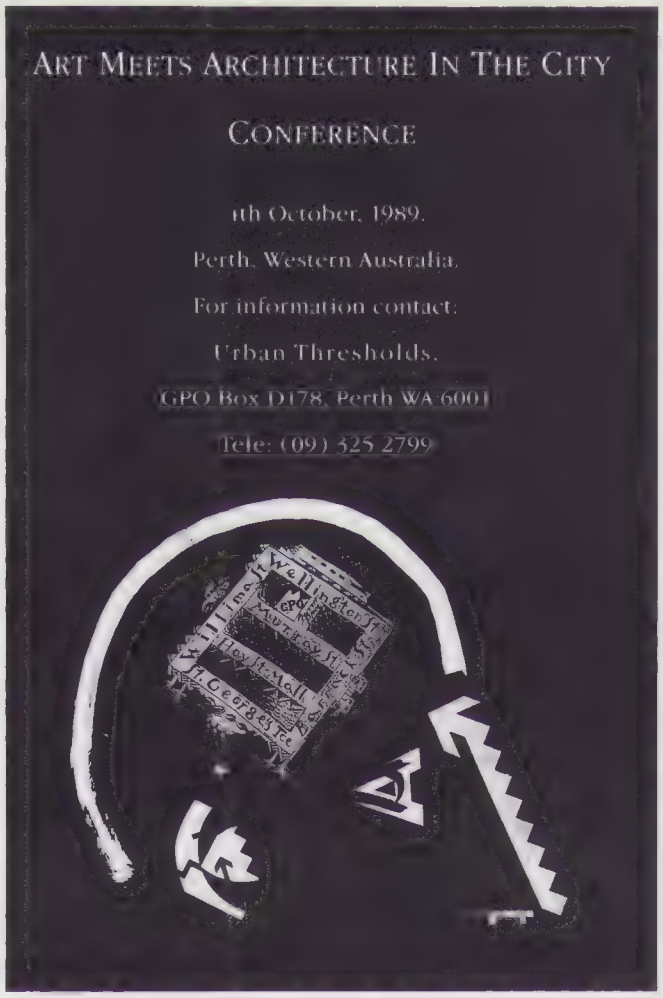
A more theorised angle is proposed by Thomas McEvilley (writing as critic, not curator). He squarely adopts a post-modernist attitude, defined as follows: 'The sense that one's culture is not a standard compared to which all others fall short, but merely one stance among many - the relativization of all communities of taste - is the essence of the reversal of will that is called post-Modernism.' The thrust of McEvilley's article is polemical, rather than historical, and he unsubtly equates modernist art with cultural colonialism, thereby suggesting that post-modern art is the aesthetic equivalent of the Viet Cong. '*Magicians of the Earth* is a landmark attempt,' continues McEvilley, 'to implement a post-Modern exhibition strategy' which he had earlier characterised as eschewing the issues of 'quality, priority, or historical centrality.' By refusing to draw out any of the contradictions which have, indeed, led western art into its current impasse, McEvilley's article adopts a curi-

ously anti-intellectual position in spite of the academic vocabulary employed. As with Mark Francis' very different article, the conclusion seems to be that any contextualisation will subvert the value of personal relativisation, and will therefore smack of oppression.

Granted that art, to a certain extent, can speak for itself, if the beholder has the required mental alertness; in a show of this size, however, voices can be unwittingly smothered. The different contexts established by the two exhibition spaces is a case in point. The Pompidou Centre was all museum: white-washed walls, individual rooms for each artist, the partitioning of one artist from another. While this allowed for better concentration, it stifled potential interaction and instituted an almost antiseptic isolation. The main hall at La Villette, however (excluding lateral gallery spaces which more or less followed the Pompidou model) was an open and interconnective space evocative of a fair or trade show. The hall's vastness (converted from the 19th-century iron and glass meat market), gave the works room to breathe, allowing them to remain visible to (and from) one another without a sense of clutter. Work by Richard Long and Claes Oldenburg cohabited happily with Esther Mahlangu (South Africa) and the Yuendumu community (Australia), provoking interesting associations which reinforced the energy generated by the work itself.

Ignorance of the context for much of the art (beyond the most summary information) also tends to favour certain bottom-line qualities, such as virtuosity and transformational impact. The old-fashioned concept of virtuosity would probably make the curators squirm, yet it was precisely this quality which tended to arrest the gaze in the dry space of the Pompidou Centre. Nepalese artist Nuche-Kaji Bajracharya's votive paintings present pantheons of Buddhist deities rendered in miniature-style detail with a control that is truly impressive. Though he works in a traditional, essentially two-dimensional space, Bajracharya occasionally includes details invoking Renaissance perspective (a decorative elephant deity peeking out from behind a lotus flower in the foreground). These remain mere details, yet they were somehow more compelling than the tantric abstractions of Acharya Vyakul and R.B. Sharma next door, despite thematic and formal links between tantrism and western abstract art that might have made these works pivotal to the show. The tantric paintings were carefully presented, but their simplicity was extremely difficult to appreciate even for an initiated viewer. They tended, alas, to sink out of sight.

The second quality which emerged was that of the power of transformation: artwork as an intervention which changes the environment (or our perception and understanding of it). This certainly comes closer to the curators' ambitions, approaching perhaps the authentically 'magic' aspect of art. One end of the hall at La Villette, for instance, was occupied by Esther Mahlangu's geometrically decorated house and a 'biomorphic' earth painting done by the Yuendumu community, against the backdrop of Richard Long's 30-foot high *Red Earth Circle* (painted in earth taken from Long's home town). Facing these, was an apparently unrelated work by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen, *From the Entropic Library*, an oversized shelf of moth-eaten, dog-eared notebooks and papers. The combination was particularly effective, not only because of harmonious colours, of forms which hold their own against their counterparts, of similar scale (though all of these factors are important, especially the last), but also because of the way they reflect one another, transform one another. The house is not only a 'machine for living', it becomes a 'dynamic machine to look at'; the earth circle is sun to the house, moon the ground, bull's-eye to the notebooks; the



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Cressida Campbell 'Vegetable Garden' 1989

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Yuendumu transformation of the ground from profane to sacred is emblematic of all the other works; and the irony of the Oldenburg/Van Bruggen sculpture suddenly lies in the enormity of its trivialness (the 'futility' of entropic transformation experienced here as comic, not as tragic).

Neither of these qualities - virtuosity and transformational power - are neutral. They demand the acquired ability to recognise that something (presumably difficult) has been excellently executed, that something else is not quite what it was. In addition, both of them ultimately reflect human 'control' (over the environment, death, fate). Just as civilisation represents control over the natural environment, and politics implies the social control of certain groups or individuals over others, art - everywhere - seems to represent a striving for control over fate (whether in a religious, personal, or intellectual context). That control, of course, is mental, and psychologically performs a 'healing' or 'repairing' role. When Jean-Hubert Martin states in his introduction that one of the exhibition's primary goals is to underscore 'the spiritual potential' of art, he is alluding to this mental function, not to hocus-pocus spiritualism (*spirituel* in French does not necessarily carry religious connotations, but refers more generally to all that is 'mind' as distinct from matter).

Magicians of the Earth tries to reinvest art with this magical function of mental transformation; it thereby succeeds in demonstrating the bankruptcy of an impotent, material approach to art. But it fails to fundamentally reinvigorate the debate surrounding modernism because the nature of the transformation *needed* here, *needed* now, remains undefined. Much of the exhibition thus loses focus, and even well-intentioned visitors require superhuman powers in order to conjure up a vision of the future.

Magiciens de la Terre was at the Centre Georges Pompidou and Grande Halle La Villette, Paris from 18 May to 14 August 1989.

ARTNOTES

Art criticism Queensland style: the final solution

While the Fitzgerald Inquiry was convincing Queenslanders to pull their heads out of the sand and demand public accountability and fair play, on the advice of the Queensland Solicitor-General the State Library shredded a copy of *Robert Mapplethorpe 10 x 10,* 1988, and *Robert Mapplethorpe,* 1989. Moreover, once this leaked out every effort was made to obscure the facts - Des Stephens, Chief Librarian and sole spokesperson on the affair has become monosyllabic. *Eyeline* and this article are the only public airing the mess has had.

Something is clear. The Library already had three Mapplethorpe books while the two new ones were bought from a local bookshop by the art librarian (in the normal way). It seems that of the original three, due to public misuse, only one remains in good enough condition for the shelves. The two new purchases were shredded by the Library because the Solicitor-General ruled that the Library could be tried and convicted on grounds of displaying obscene material. The upshot is that no Mapplethorpe books are now available in the Library. Beyond that all is muddy.

Well-founded rumour has it that once someone in the Library decided that the two recent purchases were obscene, a meeting was called with the Librarian and senior staff members. Apparently that meeting either decided to leave at least one on the shelf, to return both to the bookshop or to shred both. It is also likely the books had been shredded prior to that meeting and without its members' knowledge. This could explain Des Stephens' dilemma over what to say about what happened when, and why the books simply weren't returned to the bookshop. In other words he may be covering for a staff member. If that is the case the draconian remedy may be explained, but not when or why the matter ever went to the Solicitor General. By phone I asked Des Stephens: If the Library had checked if other public libraries held copies? No. If it had checked for prosecutions elsewhere? No. If the Library had suggested that the Solicitor General do the above? No. Had the Library told the Solicitor-General that the *Manchester Guardian* named *Robert Mapplethorpe Photographs* as one of the two best photography books of 1989? No. He did say the Solicitor-General was aware of Mapplethorpe's general reputation as a photographer.

The only conclusion that can be drawn is that the Library has used the law as a blanket and that the Solicitor-General made little if any effort to check current artistic practice or indeed current legal thought on obscenity. Maybe he had too many other things on his mind. But Davila's *Stupid as a Painter* hangs publicly in Brisbane and the Institute of Modern Art hosted a Robert Mapplethorpe survey show which toured major galleries down south. At the very least one person in the Library and the Solicitor-General seem to have suffered loss of moral fibre.

The main reason to expose such failings is to stop their recurrence. The Fitzgerald Inquiry also taught us that.

Des Stephens told me that, while the rare books are segregated, the Library has no special arrangements for books like Mapplethorpe's which strategically set out to shock the community. I find that amazing because it goes against practice used, rightly or wrongly, even by universities. That is the real cause of the shredding. It is to Des Stephens' credit that he convened a meeting with Laurie Muller from the Queensland University Press and myself, both of whom are Foundation Members of the State Library, to initiate a way of ensuring that susceptible material is safer from public vandalism and remains available. Hopefully, Mapplethorpe books will re-enter the collection once a system is in place.

Nancy Underhill

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Statement by Des Stephens, State Librarian in response to the previous note.

The State Library of Queensland is justifiably proud of the fact that it has one of the best collections of library material on art available to the public in Australia.

Recent discussions have indicated the need to review policies for housing potentially controversial material. As a consequence the State Library is reviewing its internal procedures to ensure that the widest possible collection of material is developed and maintained. Access procedures for some items will be changed to ensure that these items continue to be available in their original state.

Measures have already been undertaken to ensure that the State Library's collection of books by Mapplethorpe are a satisfactory representation of his work.

Prominent Chinese artists in Australia

On 12 July the City Art Institute, Sydney, hosted a talk by two distinguished Chinese artists who had fled Beijing a week after the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Yu Feng, a research fellow at the China Art Gallery, Beijing, and member of the standing council of the Chinese Artists' Association, spoke about the student demonstrations leading up to the Beijing massacre and in particular the role played by students from the Central Academy of Fine Art. She noted that the decade 1979-89 can be viewed as a period of relative cultural liberalisation and that Chinese artists now faced a very uncertain future.

Huang Miaozi, calligrapher, writer and member of the standing council of the Chinese Calligraphers' Association, talked about the evolution of Chinese calligraphy, and the links between calligraphy and painting. Works by Huang Miaozi and Yu Feng were exhibited in the lecture theatre. The talk was translated by Claire Roberts, curator of Asian Decorative Art, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney.

Mapplethorpe in trouble again

Jesse Helms, Senator from North Carolina, in late July managed to slip in an amendment to an omnibus bill to the effect that no federal funds should be used to support 'obscene and indecent art'. According to report the move was in part sparked by his wife. 'Lord have mercy, Jesse!' she had exclaimed on seeing the catalogue of the Roger Mapplethorpe retrospective, 'I'm not believing this'. As a result the House of Representatives voted to cut the federal arts grant ($171m) by the amount of federal money which helped fund the retrospective. The amendment would stop federal funding of any project deemed to 'promote, disseminate or produce obscene or indecent materials ... or materials which denigrate the objects or beliefs of the adherents of a particular religion or non-religion'. Mr Helms was particularly upset by a picture of a child lifting her dress and exposing herself. 'I'm embassed to talk even to my wife' [about this], said the Senator. Many people in the art world have expressed amazement at the amendment, but Walter Annenberg, paintings fancier, former Ambassador to the U.K., is reported as saying 'I'm sick of people expressing their artistic attitudes and talents in an unappetising manner'. The amendment is to be voted on by Congress, probably this September.

Vatican cover-up

Restoration of the Sistine Chapel frescos is nearing completion, but some parts of Michelangelo's original will not be restored. The draperies added in 1564 to return modesty to St Catherine of Alexandria, St Blaise and other members of the heavenly hierarchy will be left as it is. This will be hard on the Japanese TV company which has put up US$4m to pay for the restoration in return for being the first outfit to show pictures of the restored frescos, but the Vatican is adamant and argues that anyway de Volterra had removed the offending passages before he ever painted the drapery and they could never be replaced.

Stelarc Returns to Australia

When Stelarc visited Expo in Japan in 1970 he wasn't planning to live there, yet he has resided in Yokohama for the last nineteen years, making only the occasional brief visit back to Australia.

In the intervening years he has become a much travelled world figure in the area of performance art, having given performances in Japan, U.S.A., Canada, West Germany, Denmark and Mexico - and of course in Australia in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. Stelarc will for ever be associated with his Suspension Events in which he has used his own body, suspended in space by hooks into the flesh, as a symbol of the body's limitations and aspirations. Those who have been influenced by the sometimes sensational publicity that Stelarc has received, will be relieved to learn that this married man with two children has conformed to the Australian norm and on his return to Melbourne has purchased a car and a house.

Stelarc's numerous experiments with his own body and the use of amplified body sounds during his performances have led this relentless artist to some unorthodox and possibly unpalatable views on the human body. Put simply, he believes that the body has reached its biological limits and can only proceed in this post-evolutionary phase by embracing technology - not merely using it externally, as a watch on the wrist, but incorporating it within the body, like a pacemaker for the heart. His interests have included robotics and the design and manufacture of his third hand, which can be attached to his right arm and activated by his stomach muscles. He is currently negotiating with a Japanese company on a collaborative project to fabricate a new arm/hand using rubber muscle activators.

Stelarc's use of amplified body sounds has brought him to the attention of experimental music groups throughout the world. In recent years he has been guest artist at New Music America, Houston, New Music Concerts, Toronto and the Roskilde Festival in Denmark.

He returns to Australia to be artist-in-residence at Ballarat C.A.E. during 1990, and possibly to assist in the establishment of a Department of Art and Technology (though the spate of compulsory amalgamations among

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the tertiary educational institutions makes such imaginative forward planning a problem).

Melbourne (and Ballarat) can look forward to some mind/sound shattering performances by Stelarc over the next few years. He has already viewed the Yarra from Princes Bridge in Melbourne and talked enthusiastically of a floating barge with crane as the possible venue for a future performance.

Yokohama's loss. Melbourne's gain. They are 'sister cities'! *Ken Scarlett*

Japan at Europalia

The Europalia International Foundation, successor to Europalia, which since 1969 has organised nine major national festivals comprising visual art, music, theatre, cinema, animation, photography and other aspects of the arts (the last being Austria, in 1987), is this year celebrating Japan from September to December. The Foundation is based in Brussels, and the events take place in Belgium. During the last festival more than 1,300,000 people visited the art exhibitions alone. Among the major visual arts events this year will be 'The Human Figure in Japanese Art' at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 27 September - 26 November; Buddhist Religious Art from the 7th to the 19th century, 28 September - 26 November, at the Banque Bruxelles Lambert in Brussels; two major print shows, one historical at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Charleroi, 28 September - 10 December, which will include several rarely-shown collections, and 'Contemporary Japanese Prints' at the Maison de la Culture, Namur, from 22 October to 17 December, supplemented by 'Japanese Posters' at the Hessenhuis, Antwerp, from 1 October to 17 December; 'Nihonga - Contemporary Painting in Traditional Style' at the Provinciaal Hof, Bruges, 4 October - 18 November; 'Yamaguchi and Saito - Pioneers of Japanese Abstract Art' at the Musée d'Art Moderne, Brussels, 29 September - 17 September; a special showing of work by 15 contemporary Japanese sculptors, each represented by several works, at the sculpture biennial at the Middelheim Open Air Museum, Antwerp, now and until 29 October; video and technological art at the Museum of Contemporary Art; and 'Japan 1989', a group of about twelve contemporary artists 'whose work combines an acute feeling for matter with a strong Eastern sensitivity', at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent, 29 October - 17 December. In addition there are exhibitions of photography (at the Provincial Museum for Photography, Antwerp, 1 October - 12 November), ceramics, textiles, calligraphy, design and architecture. Address of the Foundation: Rue Royale 10, 100 Brussels.

Australians in Paris

The Australian Embassy in Paris is holding an exhibition by eight Australian artists to celebrate the Bicentenary of the French Revolution. The artists, who all live in France, are Diana Brennan, Rebecca Driffield, Irene Falkenstein, Eduardo Guelfenbein, Stephen McClymont, Loretta Ravera McInnes, Kevin Pearsh and Mark Stuart. The exhibition will be opened by John Kirby, Chairman Executive Committee, Australian National Council for the Celebration of the Bicentenary of the French Revolution at the Embassy on 14 September and will close on 30 September.

Heads of art schools meet

On 26, 27 and 28 September Canberra School of Art will play host to the heads of art schools' meeting. The conference is taking a positive approach in setting the theme of 'Art and Design - Change in a National and International Context'. Speakers from the Department of Employment, Education and Training, Department of Foreign Affairs and other institutions will address this topic. Conferees will have a chance to visit Canberra arts facilities and meet with politicians to represent the interests of art and design, education and training in the tertiary sector. For the first time representatives from New Zealand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, China and the Philippines have been invited to attend.

Politics of exile

The Performance Space, Sydney is host to a conference called the 'Politics of Exile' from 7 - 10 September. In this conference writers, artists from all disciplines, filmmakers and social thinkers will explore the Politics of Exile as they relate specifically to Australia. Speakers include Liz Grosz, Michelle Royer, Elizabeth Gertsakis, Stephen Muercke and Jacques Delaruelle; with performance programmes by Auto de Fe, Ania Walwicz, Yuji Sone and Wayne Stamp, Vineta Lagzdina and Canberra Dance Theatre, choregraphed by Kjai Tai Chan; and a specially curated film and video programme. An exhibition by contemporary Phillipine artists, titled *Signed, Sealed and Delivered*, on mail order brides, will be held in the gallery over the period. Conference pass $25. Each session $5. Full details phone (02) 698 7235.

AAA/AMAA conferences

For the first time for a while, the AAA and AMAA are joining conference forces this year. Both are holding their annual conferences from 22 to 24 Sept at the NGV. The AMAA conference is titled 'Today for Tomorrow: Contemporary Art in Art Museums', while the AAA's has been called 'Distinction', after Pierre Bourdieu's social critique of the judgement of taste. AMAA speakers include May Jane Jacob (Chief curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, LA), Daniel Thomas (president of the AMAA), Imants Tillers, Peter Tyndall, David Malouf and possibly Daniel Buren. Julie Ewington, who will participate in both conferences, will convene an AAA session on Decor, Diane Losche will convene another on Cultural Identity and Representation and what The Other means, while Ian Howard's session will address the Imaging of the Military. The AAA conference will open with David Bindman's lecture on the Popular Art of Revolution, focusing on France and England in 1789. Both conferences will examine different ways in which value is constructed through museums, the art market, critical writing and art history and theory.

Selected exhibitions abroad

Geneva: Halle Sud, Gunther Forg, Martin Kippenberger, 21 Sept - 28 Oct.
New York: Whitney Musem, 'Fifteen years of collecting', to 16 Oct.
Paris: Pompidou Centre, Artschwager retrospective, to 17 Sept; 'Passage de l'image', through Oct; Musee des Arts Decoratif, 'The sketchbooks of Picasso', 28 Sept - 31 Dec.
Basel: Kunstmuseum, Paul Cezanne, 10 Sept - 10 Dec.
Schaffhausen: Hallen fur Neue Kunst, Dan Flavin, early works, Robert Mangold, new paintings, to 31 Oct.
Middleheim: Museum, 'Fifteen Japanese sculptors', to 31 Oct.
Lugano: Villa Favorita, 'Expressionism from the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection' to 29 Oct.
Vienna: Weiner Secession, Wittgenstein, 13 Sept - 29 Oct.
Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art; 'Impressionist & Modern Masters from Monet to Mondrian', 3 Sept - 22 Oct.
Eindhoven: Van Abbe Museum, Allan McCollum, James Coleman, 16 Sept - 12 Nov.
Copenhagen: Ordrupgaard, Edouard Manet, 15 Sept - 26 Nov.
Prato: Musee d'art Contemporanea: 'Another objectivity', inc. John Copains, Bernd & Hilla Becher, to 18 Sept.

Michell Endowment replaced

The NGV's Michell Endowment, responsible for acquisitions of works by local artists under 40, has been wound up and replaced with the new Dame Elizabeth Stewart Endowment, to be administered by Dame Elizabeth Stewart, Hugh Morgan, Lyn Williams (NGV Trustee and Chairperson of ACCA), Jan Minchin (NGV curator, Australian Painting) and Terry Lane (NGV curator, Australian Sculpture).

Russian collectors get together

The Collectors' Club set up at the Soviet Culture Foundation, Moscow, two years ago has already been responsible for sending Soviet collections abroad to Finland, Denmark, Norway, Italy and Britain. The Club's agenda includes the preparation of an All-Union conference and the establishment of a national society of collectors.

More lease problems

Gertrude Street Artists' Space's lease has been renewed until June 1990. The Victorian Print Workshop has also had to rapidly vacate the ground floor of 200 Gertrude Street, shifting around the corner to a space adjacent to its George Street facility.

Published in New York

Paul Taylor's piece on marketing Aboriginal art in New York appeared in the Sunday *New York Times,* 21 May 1989, page 31, with the title *Primitive Dreams Are Hitting The Big Time*, a break-out quote 'The aborigines' fondness for painting is landing them squarely in the lap of the international art world', a large photo upper right, (caption: *Bush Tucker Dreaming at Wingellina* by William Sandy at John Weber Gallery -new fad in a jaded market), and biography, 'Paul Taylor is the editor of *Post-Pop Art*, to be published next month by M.I.T. Press'.

An obvious bit of editorial laziness regarding the cut between artist, dealer and agents must have shocked Big Apple dealer and Australian tourist John Weber. Weber, it said, would take 10% of any sale and Gabrielle Pizzi, dealer, was quoted in the article to support Weber's skimming the cream from a market which New Yorkers may be ready to believe is 'flooded'. Papunya Tula Company would get 5%, and the artists 45%. In fact the principal dealer will take 40%, not 10%, quoted top price $US23,600.Taylor's construction for the 'jaded market' contains an odd mixture of special pleading and damning tales from

Forum art fair

Michael Johnson will be represented by Macquarie Galleries at the Forum art fair to be held in Hamburg from 13 to 18 September. This is the fifth Forum - the first was held in Zurich - and is run by the Swiss along very egalitarian lines. Every year only 100 galleries worldwide are invited , each is given equal space and facilities and each shows only one artist. This is the first time Australia has participated and Johnson has painted three huge canvases especially for the event.

US$130,000 could be yours

The Santa Fe International Art Festival is offering a $130,000 Grand Prize and 339 other cash prizes to artists and photographers for the best interpretations of the festival's theme, 'Nature - the Environment We Share - the interdependence of All Species'. Entries are sought in all media, including painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, printmaking, works in paper, works in fabric, and experimental art. Entries may be either representational or non-representational. Artists may submit up to five separate works per single entry. Entry deadline: January 15, 1990. The Santa Fe Art Fest will be held 4 - 10 June, 1990. Exhibits will be toured. For info. contact Philip H. Green, executive director, ArtFest Partners, 535 Cordova Road, Suite 208, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501.

Blake symposium

The National Gallery of Victoria will unveil its new William Blake acquisitions - Copy of *Songs of Innocence* and a volume of illustrations to *Night Thoughts,* both handcoloured by the artist - at an exhibition from 14 Sept to 19 Nov. The gallery is also arranging a two-day Blake symposium for 16-17 September, speakers to include Professor David Bindman (University of London), Martin Butlin (Tate Gallery), Professor Peter Tomory (La Trobe University), Michael Tolley (Adelaide University), Peter Otto (Melbourne Univeristy) and NGV

Hiroshima gallery

A major new Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by the architect Kisho Kurokawa, has opened in Hiroshima. It is part of an 'art park' which crowns a hill overlooking the city, where buildings designed by Kenzo Tange (who designed the Peace Memorial Museum in 1955) will house various cultural institutions. Adjacent to the Museum of Contemporary Art is a sculpture court the design of which is variously described as 'contemplative' and 'reminiscent of traditional Japanese pebble gardens'

RICHARD KILLEEN

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CORRESPONDENCE

Getting it right

In her review of *Prints and Australia* which appeared in your June issue, Kay Vernon rightly bewailed the lack of a catalogue, room brochure or book to accompany the exhibition. She went on to comment: 'The ANG is the only gallery in Australia to have consistently avoided publishing catalogues or books with its major exhibitions.'

Although it is true that the curators of both the Australian print and drawing shows and the exhibition of Fred Williams's work failed to bring out publications on time, Gael Newton's book accompanying the photography show *Shades of Light*, mine accompanying the survey of lithography *Lasting Impressions* and Wally Caruana's *Windows on the Dreaming* were all available at the respective openings.

Pat Gilmour,
Canberra

Creative thinking

Michael Denholm in his article, 'The pipers'pay the tunes they play', (*AM* 23) discussing the Bonnin Report refers only in passing to the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia's *Broadsheet*, published quarterly.

An outline of *Broadsheet* in his article may have provided him with an interesting base for a discussion on current and alternative distribution methods for our art magazines.

Whilst all other magazines cited in Denholm's article are sold, *Broadsheet* is distributed free, enabling the magazine to achieve a current circulation of 3,500, predominantly in South Australia. Free distribution would not be an option for all magazines but the example of *Broadsheet* is perhaps evidence of the need for more creative thought with regard to circulation.

If one of the roles of art magazines is to increase interest and awareness in contemporary art, in ways that are both intelligent and approachable, then *Broadsheet*, with its circulation three times that of most funded magazines, has much to commend it.

David O'Halloran,
Director,
Contemporary Art Centre of S.A.

Identification needed

In Christopher Heathcote's 'Wanted a Little Bit of Incoherence' (*AM* 22) I strongly suspect that my exhibition *Painting as Phenomena*, A.C.C.A. Melbourne May/June 1988, was the subject of what purported to be a general comment on recent installation in Melbourne. Although described in detail the said exhibition is left unauthored, encouraging the lay reader to regard it as a fictitious generic installation. This is obviously a quite spurious veiled attack, calling attention to an event/exhibition by being specific only to those 'in the know' (such as a particular local audience) whilst absolving the writer from any further serious debate. I would like to make some points for those who saw the exhibition.

I do not consider myself an installation artist or said piece an installation, although some publicity by the A.C.C.A. may have stated such. I called the exhibition *Painting as Phenomena* precisely because my 80s black works grew out of concerns inherent in painting, especially American post war painting and subsequent reductivism. To quote from the exhibition's accompanying catalogue essay by Bronwyn Clark-Coolee, '... the consideration of a three-dimensional surface as an extended painting is not far removed from the concept of early Richard Serra'. This strong referencing of the formal concerns of painting is mirrored in the piece's extremely simple central placement in the gallery (also citing the primary structures of Andre, Judd, Morris et al). The gratuitous use of black gloss enamel in this work was further amplified by a darkened interior, the spotlights simply directed across a simple arrangement of 14 panels covered with 40 shovels, 40 hammers, and 40 long handled axes. The effect was a deliberate debasement of the art surface, eliciting a single immediate confrontation - the implosion of the spectacular contemporary art object, under enforced twilight and silence.

By immediately labelling my painting on the floor (rather than on the wall) an installation, full stop! Heathcote falls into the enforced prescription he otherwise criticises. By not actually identifying myself and others (Kent Morris at George Paton for instance) he hints at another agenda hiding in the light.

Scott Redford,
Surfers Paradise, Qld

BOOK REVIEWS

A singular vision

James Mollison, *A Singular Vision: The Art of Fred Williams*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, $65 paper ($125 hardback)

MARGARET PLANT

THIS BOOK is an artist's history/biography: it is not art history, since it eschews contextualisation of the artist beyond the contacts important to him, and makes no rigorous overall attempt to appraise his contribution. As with the Patrick McCaughey monograph first published in 1980, the artist's reputation is accepted, re-endorsed and heroised. Fred Williams has helped us see aspects of the landscape of Australia anew and his life has demonstrated a devotion to his profession that is deemed to be worth detailing in technical and domestic ways. After reading this book the wife and daughters will be known, as will the artists with whom Fred Williams painted in his on-site expeditions - Cliff Pugh or Frazer Fair, Harold Hattam or John Perceval. These expeditions are now famous as episodes in the social history of Australian art, especially since Fred Williams didn't drive and after he moved from the Dandenongs area was dependent on others to ferry him hither and yon. (It is especially fascinating to learn that he refused his step-father's proffered gift of a sports car). Painting in the Pilbara, his wife had trouble finding him as he was covered in red dust and up to his ankles in spinifex. He didn't get enough data from that first Pilbara trip, so returned some few months later and the wife was able to ferry him around 'without disruption ... he was able to paint seriously'! And we even can get to know what he ate on his painting trips: on the waterfall expeditions with Frazer Fair, Mrs Williams provided homemade soup and broken Ryvita biscuits (they *may* have broken en route), and this was supplemented with a hot pie and pink or brown lamingtons (the latter colour-coded according to whether it was the outward or homeward journey).

Indeed, the fascination of the book is just this sort of domestic detail transmitted

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quite without irony, and a substantial amount of quotation from the artist's famous personal diaries. Fred Williams was no great stylist (that is, in the diaries), he doggedly and daily detailed the weather and his activities and his painting hopes in a straightforward nineteenth-century manner. Patrick McCaughey had only limited access to the diaries; James Mollison one understands to have had access through an intermediary, selecting material relevant to those pictures shown in the Australian National Gallery retrospective of the artist. James Mollison sketched with Williams in the 1960s was early in the service of Williams' reputation, cataloguing the etchings in 1968 (in a volume printed by Fred Williams' dealer, Rudy Komon). That work was essentially and valuably a catalogue; it was prefaced laconically. The new Mollison text is reasonably brief: the book appears to be substantial, but its volume is in the illustrations, often enjoying the full page, and in colour. The book is manageable and elegant. The text is divided into specific painting-site-chapters - in this it is structurally close to the monograph by Patrick McCaughey. The portraits are covered in a little over a page in Chapter XVIII: one turns back to the landscapes from the discomfort of that genre as Fred Williams handled it, as if the subject should be further reduced and floated off into blank backgrounds.

Through Mollison's *Fred Williams: A Singular Vision*, what the artist does, says, paints, is never interrogated, the 'vision' is singular and unchallenged. The contradictions of the Fred Williams myth (as it is now becoming) are never acknowledged. Despite the fact that Fred Williams is often quoted as saying he didn't care much for the landscape and thought that it was much the same all over Australia, ('I don't want to impose anything on the landscape and I don't care where the landscape is') he went to extraordinary pains to be driven into it, take diverse holidays at potential sites, be flown over it, to look down at it from city skyscrapers, and at least early on, have it virtually outside his back door. He consulted Shorbon Hill's *Physiography of Victoria* as McCaughey and Mollison both document, and he went to lengths as extraordinary as Dacre Smyth to find waterfalls of Victoria (and to redo, challenge or outdo Von Guérard's famous colonial painting, *Strath Creek*).

There is a sense in which Fred Williams is a profoundly conservative artist (this is no doubt his appeal for Peter Fuller). No less than for Heysen, Mother Nature was the starting point for Williams, although she was consulted totally without sentimentality. The final grandiose realisation was in terms of the artist's heroic process of observation in front of 'her' and his continued wrestling after prolonged scrutiny and many studies, within the studio. The transparency theory: that we look 'through' the paintings to nature, and to specific landscape, is assumed in most Fred Williams' discussions. Such a view: that we *learn* to see the landscape via Williams' paintings, is a fundamental assumption of Mollison's book (the Werribee landscapes, for instance, 'show an aspect of the Australian landscape that most of us have not yet noticed').

Inevitably the meaning and reputation will be assessed, however pedantic the exercise may seem. If Fred Williams may not have been the greatest diary stylist, certainly he was a painter-stylist, but this very achievement might well contaminate his future reputation. He is vulnerable to easy imitation. His imprint can be gauged in many a painted landscape, amateur as well as professional, exploiting his geometric sense of the gum tree as repeated verticals and his figure-on-ground procedures that give an easy modern look. The degree to which he can be imitated may be as disastrous as it was for Hans Heysen, serving to provoke banal repetitions, cloy-

PETER SKIPPER

Wirtuka, 1987 183 x 122 cm

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ing the original work.

The way in which the Williams paintings are designated 'good paintings' is another assumption of the text. Mollison is reticent with value judgements. It is clear that Williams painted with other 'good' paintings in mind; Corot's *Bent Tree* early on, paintings by Cézanne, Matisse, Von Guérard as mentioned, Streeton, Roberts: a reassuring mix of the School of Paris and the School of the Antipodes. Williams' *My Garden* of 1965-66 might be viewed as an outdoor version of Matisse's *Red Studio,* to take a School of Paris example. Instead of being, like - say - Dobell, a visitor to England and to the replete past of European tradition returning to paint Australian content with a traditional style, Williams, in England in the 1950s, absorbed a European tradition, managed to return and to paint Australia with a well understood international vocabulary, thoroughly modernist and local references (late Tom Roberts at Sassafras, Von Guérard, McCubbin's *The Pioneers,* Streeton's *Fire's On*).

Williams places himself knowingly and unapologetically in an Australian tradition which is updated by his awareness of what the American abstractionists were doing mid-century: Sam Francis, for example, in the compositional spatterings and all-over grounds seen to advantage in the 'minimalist' strategies of Williams' *Silver and Grey* landscapes. As an artist active on the periphery (Australia) but mindful of both European and American centres, Williams is an obvious success, an apparently international Australian.

His national coverage was exemplary. Whatever the stated indifference to specific landscape, Williams ranged well beyond his home state to Mittagong, Cape York, Broken Hill, the Murray around Loxton, Bass Strait islands, Queensland rain forests and the Pilbara, a much more even-handed coverage than any previous Australian artist. The varied organisations of these territories is of interest. In criticism, quite a lot has been made in general of the map and the grid as basic conceptual modes of organisation in twentieth-century painting and special claims have been made for painters operating these supposedly cybernetic or general technological paradigms: theirs is deemed a relevant contemporary insight, not just an adaptation of Matisse or Cézanne. Williams 'mapped' from above, from an aeroplane or from a nearby You Yang peak, or he 'gridded' from ground level in Mittagong or the Sherbrooke forest finding the structure, early on, to contradict the proverbial untidiness that became a cliché for colonial painters with a love of field and coppice running in their veins.

In the face of the artist's statement of intention and all of the documentary procedures detailed in this book (the role of the on-site gouache and the polaroids and the admirable technical detailing of grounds, glazes, colour wheels and canvas types) remains the challenging question of the extent to which Fred Williams was an informational painter, a latter-day itinerant nineteenth-century painter. And yet Williams is not of course just this: some part of his significance rests on the degree of abstraction that detaches his paintings from the landscape and yet at the same time initiates a delicate tension between the painting-reading and the landscape-reading. The 'problem' may well be couched as a semiotic enterprise concerning signifiers and signifieds, but of course many readers will be comforted by the very absence of such discussion. The meaning and location of the Williams' opus cannot really be addressed until the heroic painter biography is well absorbed (as it surely must be after the McCaughey and Mollison books). Australians may also need to relinquish their solipsistic regard for the landscape subject in order fully to meet the paintings. Anecdotal material aside, the technical observations in the Mollison book and a pain-dimensional quality in many of the reproductions may well aid the encounter.

Vivid memories

Early Sydney Moderns; John Young and the Macquarie Galleries 1916-1946, Jean Campbell, Craftsman House, 1988, 203 pp., $55.00

HEATHER JOHNSON

The Boyd and Lindsay family dynasties are well known in Australian art. Now, in telling the story of her father, the art framer, restorer, dealer and gallery director, John Young, Jean Campbell gives us another Australian art family - this time involved largely in the 'other side' of art production. From 1916 when he decided to give up his former successful employment as a salesman and start an art framing and restoration business, until his death in 1946, John Young was closely associated with all aspects of art in Sydney. He passed his interest on to his three daughters: Beryl Mandel who became an art student and teacher, Jean Campbell, art critic and historian, and Clarice Thomas, art restorer and gallery director. Young's grand-daughter, Kathryn Campbell/Harper, is also a skilled art historian and his son-in-law, Robert Campbell, was a noted watercolour painter, director of the Queensland and South Australian state galleries and a member of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board.

Campbell's book is a mixture of anecdotal reminiscences and useful new information from the early records of the Macquarie Galleries and her father's letters. This makes the book an enjoyable and interesting 'read' but somewhat frustrating in that none of the information is referenced - the book contains no foot notes or bibliography.

John Young was born in Sydney - the son of a grocer - and left school very early. A fortunate youthful friendship with Leslie Allen, later Professor of English and Classics at the Australian National University, stimulated an interest in literature and the arts which Young cultivated himself through reading. Campbell's biography of her father well illustrates how successful his self-education was, not only in his knowledge of philosophy and the arts but in his broad intellectual approach - particularly to art.

It is Young's broad eclectic view of art that is the dominant feature of Campbell's book, and this raises a point which concerns most art history written since the 1960s: the pervasiveness and the privileging of the 'modern' - the idea that for anything to be worthwhile or noteworthy in art it has to be modern or ahead of its time. The title of Campbell's book, *Early Sydney Moderns,* undoubtedly coined to attract readers, in fact down-plays the wide scope of Young's help and patronage of dozens of artists - many more traditional than modern - and his involvement in all the art activities in Sydney. Similarly, the twenty coloured plates in the book are

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reproductions of works of the so-called 'modern' painters such as Roland Wakelin, Roy de Maistre, Thea Proctor, Grace Cossington Smith, Grace Crowley and Dorrit Black. There are no reproductions of the works of the numerous traditional painters such as Robert Johnson, Harold Herbert, A.E. Newbury, Percy Lindsay, Howard Ashton, Ernest Buckmaster and James R. Jackson, also in many cases befriended, financially supported and often given their first exhibitions, and certainly many later ones, by Young.

Fortunately, in her text Campbell gives a much more well-balanced picture of her father's activities, stressing his friendship and support of artists such as the conservative landscape painter J.R. Eldershaw and the arch anti-modernist M.J. MacNally as much as his support of artists experimenting in more modern trends; and relating his love of old master prints and drawings as much as his enjoyment of Roland Wakelin's paintings. Young's credo of art was that it should be a thing of beauty. Schools, styles, subject matter, trends per se did not concern him. Campbell relates over and over his wide ranging support (and with the Macquarie Galleries showing a new exhibition every two weeks for the thirteen years Young was associated with it, it can be well appreciated that almost every artist working in Australia was shown there at some time). Artists ranged from the doyens of Australian art such as Arthur Streeton, Hans Heysen, Tom Roberts, Bertram Mackennal, George Lambert and Elioth Gruner to the traditional James R. Jackson, Norman Carter, and Norman Lloyd to the more modern John D. Moore, Ralph Balson and Rah Fizelle. In fact, on looking at the exhibition lists of the Macquarie Galleries (still held at the Galleries), the exhibition of 'modern' painters formed only a quite small percentage of the total exhibitions.

The privileging of the modern which has coloured John Young's and the Macquarie Galleries' reputations (before the publication of Campbell's book Young was most often mentioned for his support of Roland Wakelin alone) is perhaps the main factor leading to Young's 'surprise' support of the plaintiffs in the 1944 Archibald Prize case. In light of Young's eclectic view of art and his belief that art should be a beautiful and spiritual thing, his opinion that Dobell's painting of Joshua Smith was not a true portrait but a caricature is not surprising, but rather, in keeping with the precepts he followed throughout his life. Campbell relates, with understandable feeling, the effect the trial and the perceived desertion of the artists he had long and generously supported and whom he believed shared his views, had on her father.

Campbell's natural concentration on the activities of the Macquarie Galleries tends to lessen the importance of other galleries operating in Sydney at the time. The Grosvenor Gallery, for instance, supported as eclectic a group of artists as the Macquarie Galleries (in fact most of the same artists showed at the Grosvenor and the Macquarie Galleries). 'Modern' artists such as Thea Proctor, Kenneth MacQueen, Donald Friend, and Frank Hinder exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery before exhibiting at the Macquarie Galleries and the Contemporary Group exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery for five years before moving to the Macquarie Galleries in 1930. In spite of this Campbell's book is richly evocative of the complex network of art activities in Sydney in the 1920s and 1930s: most artists exhibited in several of the galleries and often belonged to and showed in more than one of the art societies; directors of the private galleries often managed art society exhibitions and solo exhibitions for artists - sometimes in other galleries; private gallery directors wrote articles and art criticism for newspapers and art magazines and in John Young's case, for a short time published his own art magazine; private gallery owners were closely associated with the state gallery - Young himself acting for a period as director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Not least among the delights of Campbell's very readable book are her lively descriptions of the physical appearance of the artists and others she obviously remembers well. These, complemented by many photographs, sketches and fully fledged portraits of the main characters, add to the vividness of her recollection of her father's life.

Salerooms

Business as usual

Charles Nodrum

My overall impression of Joel's July painting sale was of a slightly more interesting offering than their April auction, with, again overall, a slightly easier market which appeared to result in the more optimistically reserved pictures being passed in.

The offering of early Colonial School paintings was fairly light with a virtual absence of major works. The Impressionist period, by contrast had some fine pieces: Fred McCubbin's *The Pool, Heidelberg*, 1910 ($200-$250,000) sold for $200,000, but an important early Streeton *Summer Day, Chartresville*, 1889 was passed in ($200-$250,000) with a sporting post-sale offer from the trade of $180,000 rejected by the vendors - suggesting they are in no particular hurry to sell. Walter Withers *Milking Time* came up yet again, this time with an estimate of $80-$90,000 only to be passed in at $75,000. A crisp and sunny Will Ashton of the *Harbour Front at Concarneau* sold for a relatively modest $15,500 ($10-$15,000) and in similar vein James Jackson's oil *The Spit* sold satisfactorily at $50,000 ($40-$50,000).

Of the pre-Impressionists two noteworthy pictures failed to sell: Buvelot's warm evening *Landscape at Trawool, between Tallarook and Yea* was passed in at $70,000 ($80-100,000) underscoring the slowing down of prices of the Colonial School which has become apparent over the last year or so. J.A. Turner's large *Fighting for Home* failed to sell at $260,000 against an estimate of $270-300,000. The story of this painting highlights a lesson which old hands have always kept in mind at auction but which some of the less experienced buyers have either not known or disregarded, namely - be very careful about bidding too far against one other bidder. In this case, this Turner came up for sale a few years ago with a competitive reserve well under the $200,000 mark. It was fiercely contested by a Melbourne collector on the floor against Connell on the phone who eventually succeeded in buying for $320,000. Now, if I am right in assuming that there were no other bidders apart from those two, it is obvious that had one of them not been there, the other would have secured it for under $200,000; hence, when it comes up for re-auction at a later date it should presumably go in with approximately the same estimate and reserve - which was not the case this time. Furthermore, there is another golden rule for the successful sale of paintings at auction: The works must come fresh on to the market and not have been offered around the trade prior to the sale. Connell's well-publicised financial problems had forced this painting back on to the market some time ago, but without success; so given all these factors it was small surprise there was little interest.

A not radically dissimilar turn of events surrounded the offering of Arthur Boyd's famous *Moses throwing down the Tablets of the Law*. This had been purchased from the original collector for, gossip had it, a price in the $700,000s and was being re-

offered by a vendor with trade connections. Now in the past - good times or bad times - this has often proved a recipe for disaster. A few years ago Christie's had no success trying to sell one of Arthur Boyd's best-known Wimmera paintings on behalf of the Sydney dealer who had purchased it from the Voss Smith Collection. Equally unsuccessful was Sotheby's offer for private tender of Von Guerard's large *Weatherboard Falls* on behalf of the Melbourne dealer/collector who had purchased it from the Dalgety family in England a short while before.

Now while it is true that these paintings sold privately at a later date, the fact remains that this operation is a highly risky one at the best of times and as such it is an almost worthless indicator of the general health of the market.

The remaining modern paintings seemed to sell fairly briskly. A fine Joy Hester watercolour *Bouquet* sold for $9,000 ($6-7,000) and a smaller work of $8,000 ($2,500-3,000). Yosl Bergner's *Village Band* went for $41,000 ($34-37,000) and his *Acrobats* for $10,000 ($8 - $10,000). A pleasant but not especially notable late Blackman sold for $28,000 ($18-22,000) though Tucker's important early watercolour *Theatre* brought a mere $9,000 against a low estimate of $2-8,000; this was possibly the bargain of the sale given the rarity of early Tuckers and the strength of its Social Realist imagery. A sound Margaret Preston still life sold for $58,000 ($40-50,000) and the Namatjira market remains rock-solid with his *Heavy Tree Gap* selling for $29,000 ($17-19,000). There were several interesting Percevals in this sale which met with a mixed reaction. A large 1972-73 oil; *Bridge of Dreams* was passed in at $75,000 against what I consider a fairly rich reserve of $80-90,000; personally I get much pleasure from these late Percevals whose high-key palette and vivacious calligraphy I find thoroughly encouraging. However, the market has never prized them as highly as the earlier works so it was no great surprise to find this work not selling. His small 1940s *Portrait of a Girl* sold modestly for $10,000 ($8-12,000). Perceval did a number of these small, smoothly brushed and quietly understated portraits and Gould Galleries exhibited a fine group of them in their Perceval survey last year; they too found that their somewhat introspective nature, coupled with the still prevalent resistance to buying portraits, resulted in ten works being admired rather than purchased. By contrast, two very early and openly derivative paintings, sold extremely vigorously. *The Marguerites* of 1940 looking decidedly Van Goghish, sold for $32,000 ($10-15,000) and the take-off of Modigliani's *Girl with Hat* sold for $27,000 ($8-10,000) - the former being a very good price given what appeared to be something of a condition problem.

Guy Grey-Smith, Thompson's Bay, Rottnest

Finally, as usual, the sale had a huge array of low-priced paintings which were sold in the day session, which for years has offered dealers and collectors the chance to pick-up the occasional little goody. These one-thousand lot sessions are so painful to mind and body that I avoid them like purgatory and prefer to leave bids with staff or friends. Last April my modest offers were all outbid; this time, my again modest offers did secure a few interesting little odds and ends, so my general impression is that the bicentennial balloon is thankfully descending and it looks like being back to business as usual.

Sotheby's 14 August sale proved highly volatile sale with many surprises and quite a few disappointments. Nolan's important early *First-class marksman* brought a healthy $825,000 (a record for a living Australian artist); Dobell's *Study for Irish Youth*, $154,000 ($40-60,000); Colin McCahon's *Untitled* $22,000 ($7-9,000); Williams' 1970s *Kew, Billabong* $148,000 ($80-90,000); the real surprise of the sale was Guy Grey-Smith whose works went up by a factor of about six - *Thompsons Bay, Rottnest*, $37,000 ($6-8,000) and *Nude with Everlastings* $39,000 ($7-9,000). Williams' oils have performed patchily recently but interest seems to be returning; Nolan's prices continue to advance firmly and work by Hawkins, Smart, Blackman and Bunny continued to sell above estimates.

The bad news: both important early Streetons failed to sell but estimates were rich to say the least. Two large Brack oils were also passed in suggesting that last year's passions might be cooling somewhat, but here again estimates were fairly bullish (well over the $100,000 mark) and one at least had been on the market for quite some time. A similar problem arose with Piguenit's major oil *Sydney from the North Shore,* which failed to spark off serious interest, having been in the market privately prior to the sale with, reputedly, a much higher price tag.

Halfway between joy and doom were lots such as Margaret Preston's *Anemones* ($220-200,000), which although it did not sell attracted a bid of $200,000 on the floor - not a bad offer all the same. Perceval's 1948 *Breaking of the Strike*, $180,000 was another example of a major work selling handsomely if not brilliantly.

All in all a lot of money spent on what appeared to be a far more bullish sale than Joel's.

Auction house records

Sales through Christie's International in the 1988-89 season topped US$1bn, and Sotheby's topped $1bn in the second quarter alone. For Christie's the season's takings represented a 62 per cent increase, and for Sotheby's 58 per cent. Best performers: Impressionist works, with gains averaging 35.8 per cent annually over five years, followed by modern paintings with 35.2 per cent.

Leanne Crisp
Paintings
17 September - 6 October
Giles Street Gallery, 31 Giles Street, Kingston ACT 2604 Tel: (062) 950489

Gallery Listings

The information is printed as supplied by the galleries. Responsibility is not accepted by *Art Monthly* for errors and changes. Exhibitions are of paintings unless indicated. Please supply information by the first of the month preceding publication.

Queensland

Adrian Slinger Galleries, 216 Queen St (The Mall), Brisbane 4000. (07) 221 7938. Dealers in Fine Art. Australian contemporary and traditional works.

Bellas Gallery, 499 Adelaide St, Brisbane 4000. (07) 832 1317.

City of Ipswich Art Gallery, Cnr Limestone and Nicholas Sts, Ipswich 4305. (07) 280 9246.

Gladstone Art Gallery and Museum, Cnr Goondoon & Bramston Sts, Gladstone 4680. (079) 72 2022.

Milburn+Arte Galleries, First Floor, 336-338 George St, Brisbane 4000. (07) 221 5199.

Noosa Regional Gallery, Noosa Shire Council Chambers, Pelican St, Tewantin 4567. (071) 47 1464.

The Palms Gallery, 22 Somer Street, Hyde Park, Townsville, 4812. (077) 212 060. Fine art, paintings and pottery.

'Patrina' Fine Art Salon, 32 Maple St, Maleny 4552. (071)
94 2283. International and Australian landscapes, etchings, pastels and other fine arts. Work by Jozsef Balogh, Charles Bassett, Ken Farrow, W. Blamire Young. Ken Willes

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Flinders Mall, Townsville 4810. (077) 722560.

Philip Bacon Galleries, 2 Arthur St, New Farm 4005. (07)358 3993 Regular exhibitions of Australian artists plus a large collection of 19th century paintings.

Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland Cultural Centre, South Brisbane 4101. (07) 840 7333.

Ray Hughes Gallery, 11 Enoggera Tce, Red Hill 4059. (07) 369 3757.

Roz MacAllan Gallery, First Floor, 106 Edward St, Brisbane 4101. (07) 229 4355. To 9 September, three photographers;

Schubert Gallery, 34 Orchid Ave, Surfers Paradise 4217. (075)
38 9599.

The Centre Gallery, 135 Bundall Rd, Surfers Paradise 4217. (075) 319578. To 30 September, Fibre installation: Mona Hessing and Ruth Remmele

Territory Colours, 141 Marina Mirage, 74 Seaworld Drive, Gold Coast 4217. (075) 91 6220. Fine art from Northern Australia North West, N.T., Far North Queensland.

The Institute of Modern Art, Fourth Floor, 106 Edward St, Brisbane 4000. (07) 229 5985.

Visions Gallery, 'Mariners Cove', Seaworld Drive, Main Beach 4217.(075) 32 5686.

New South Wales

Aboriginal Artists Gallery, 477 Kent St, Sydney 2000 (02) 261 2929.

Access Gallery, 115 Mullens St, (Cnr Goodsir) Balmain 2039. (02) 818 3598. 6 - 24 September, Jules Sher, paintings; Barbar Licha, paintings and works on paper. 27 Sept - 15 October, Joy Henderson, bronze scultpure; Anne Latter, works on paper.

Albury Regional Art Centre, 546 Dean Street, Albury 2640.

Art Directors Gallery, 21 Nurses Walk, The Rocks 2000. (02) 27 2740. Continuous exhibition of paintings, limited edition prints and posters by Ken Done.

Artarmon Galleries, 479 Pacific Hwy, Artarmon 2064. (02) 427 0322.

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery Rd, Sydney 2000. (02) 225 1700. For details of the public film and lecture programme phone 225 1740.

Arthaus, 20 Palmer Lane, Darlinghurst 2010. (02) 33 4116.

Artmet Gallery, 124 Jersey Rd, Woollhara 2025. (02) 327 2390.

Artspace, First Floor, 11 Randle St, Surry Hills 2010. (02) 212 5031.

Australian Centre for Photography, Dobell House, 257 Oxford St, Paddington 2021. (02) 331 6253.

Australian Museum, 6-8 College Street, Sydney 2000. (02) 339 8111.

Barry Stern Exhibiting Gallery, 12 Mary Pl, Paddington 2021. (02) 332 1875.

Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, First Floor, Civic Centre, Russell St, Bathurst 2795. (063) 33 6283.

Beth Hamilton Galleries, Shop 18, Northbridge Plaza, Northbridge 2063. (02) 958 7366.

Beth Mayne's Studio Shop, Cnr Palmer & Burtons Sts, Darlinghurst 2010. (02) 357 6264. Presenting smaller works of well known artists, both early and contemporary.

Blaxland Gallery, 6th Floor, Grace Bros City Store, Cnr Market & Pitt Sts, Sydney 2000. (02) 238 9390. To 16 September, James Whitington, monotypes; Ingrid Johnstone, paintings, prints and monotypes.

Bloomfield Galleries, 118 Sutherland St, Paddington 2021. (02) 326 2122.

BMG Fine Art Gallery, 95 Holdsworth St, Woollahra 2025. (02) 327 5411.

Broken Hill City Art Gallery, Chloride St, Broken Hill 2880. (080) 6602.

Christopher Day Gallery, Cnr Paddington & Elizabeth Sts, Paddington 2021. (02) 326 1952.

Contemporary Jewellery Gallery, 162 Queen St, Woollahra 2025. (02) 32 1611. 6 - 25 September, Catherine Truman.

Cooper Gallery, 3 Cooper St, Paddington 2021. (02) 331 2060.

Coventry Gallery, 56 Sutherland St, Paddington 2021. (02) 331 4338.

Craft Centre, 100 George St, The Rocks 2000. (02) 27 9126. Continual display of craft work at the Craft Council of NSW retail sales outlet, representing the work of over 300 Australian artisans in glass, leather, ceramics, wood, textiles, jewellery and metalwork.

DCArt, 36 Jersey Rd, Woollahra 2025. (02) 327 8626.

Eddie Glastra Gallery, 44 Gurner St, Paddington 2021. (02) 331 6477.

EMR Gallery, 30 Renwick St, Redfern 2016. (02) 698 9184.

First Draft, 27 Abercrombie St, Sydney. (02) 698 4439.

Fourteen Roses Gallery, 8 Evans St, Balmain, Sydney 2041. (02) 810 8293.

Galerie Anne Gregory, 40 Gurner St, Paddington 2021. (02) 360 2285. 6 - 30 September, Martin Sharp, posters and graphic work from the 60s to 80s.

Gallery 460, 460 Avoca Drive, Green Point 2250. (043) 69 2013. 8 - 24 September, David Rose, screenprints.

Garry Anderson Gallery, 102 Burton St, Darlinghurst 2010. (02) 331 1524.

Geo Styles Gallery, 50 Hunter St, Sydney 2000. (02) 233 2628.

Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, P.O.Box 725 Goulburn 2580. Gallery will open in September with the Etchings of Sidney Long from the Richard King Collection.

Griffith Regional Gallery, 167-185 Banna Ave, Griffith 2680. (069) 625991.

Harrington Street Gallery, 17 Meagher St, Chippendale 2008. (02) 6997378.

Holdsworth Galleries, 86 Holdsworth St, Woollahra 2025. (02) 32 1364. Changing exhibition every three weeks by well-known Australian artists.

Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Cnr Albion Ave and Selwyn St, Paddington 2021. (02) 339 9526.

Irving Galleries, 1 Hargrave St, Paddington 2021. (02) 360 5566. 8 - 30 September, Lyndall Milani, installation..

Josef Lebovic Gallery, 34 Paddington St, Paddington 2021. (02) 332 1840. Specialises in Australian, English and European printmakers.

Juniper Hall, National Trust, 248 Oxford Street, Paddington 2025.

Lake Macquarie Gallery, Old Council Chambers, Main Rd, Speers Point 2284. (049) 58 0382.

Lewers Bequest and Penrith Regional Art Gallery, 86 River Rd, Emu Plains 2750. (047) 35 1448. 8 September - 22 Ocotber, 'Historical and contemporary Australian woodcuts'.

Lismore Regional Art Gallery, 131 Molesworth St, Lismore 2480. (066) 21 1536.

Macquarie Galleries, 204 Clarence St, Sydney 2000. (02) 264 9787. To 9 September, Trevor Weekes, Graham Fransella and Kevin White. 12 - 30 September, Rod Carmichael, paintings; Ian Gentle, sculpture and works on paper.

Maitland City Art Gallery, Brough House, Church St, Maitland 2320. (049) 33 6725.

Manly Art Gallery and Museum, West Esplanade, Manly 2095. (02)
949 2435. To July 30, Our Precious Gifts - Donations to the Permanent Collection.

Milburn+Arte Galleries, In process of moving. Any enquiries ring (02) 360 2285.

Moore Park Gallery, 17 Thurlow St, Redfern 2016. (02) 698 8555. 5 - 28 September, Bob Marchnat, paintings.

Mori Gallery, 56 Catherine St, Leichhardt 2040. (02) 560 4704.

Mosman Gallery, 122 Avenue Rd, Mosman 2088. (02) 960 1124. Ongoing exhibitions by leading Australian artists.

Muswellbrook Regional Art Gallery, Town Hall, Bridge St, Muswellbrook 2333. (065) 43 3984.

New England Regional Art Museum, Kentucky St, Armidale 2350. (067) 725 255. The home for the Armidale City, Chandler Coventry and Howard Hinton Collections.

Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Laman St, Newcastle 2300. (049) 23 263.

North Sydney Contemporary Gallery, 65 Union St, North Sydney 2060.

Old Brewery Gallery, 24 The Esplanade, Wagga Wagga 2650. (069) 21 5274. To 10 September, Margaret Cornish, paintings; 15 Sept - 2 oct, Joy Scherger, paintings.

Orange Regional Gallery, Civic Square, Byng St, Orange 2800. (063) 621 755.

Painters Gallery, First Floor, 137 Pyrmont St, Pyrmont 2009. (02)
660 5111. To 16 September, Elizabeth Cummings, paintings; 19 September - 7 October, Heather Ellyard.

The Performance Space, 199 Cleveland St, Redfern 2016. (02) 698 7235.

Printfolio Gallery, Gallery Level, Westpac Plaza, 60 Margaret St,
Sydney 2000. (02) 27 6690. Continuing shows of Australian and international printmakers, all mediums, plus early works including engravings and chromo-lithographs. Also a fine selection of Australian made ceramics and glass by our leading artists.

Ray Hughes Gallery, 270 Devonshire St, Surry Hills 2010. (02) 698 3200.

Rex Irwin Art Dealer, First Floor, 38 Queen St, Woollahra 2025. (02)32 3212.

Richard King, 141 Dowling St, Woolloomooloo 2011. (02) 358 1919. September, mixed show by appointment.

Robin Gibson Gallery, 278 Liverpool St, Darlinghurst 2010. (02) 331 6692.

Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, 13 Macdonald St, Paddington 2021. (02) 360 4484. To 16 September, Guncter Christmann, Geoff Lowe and Geoff Waery; 19 September - 7 October, Richard Goodwin.

S.H. Ervin Gallery, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill, Sydney 2000. (Access via Argyle St and Watson Rd, The Rocks). (02) 258 0174.

Savill Galleries, 156 Hargrave St, Paddington 2021. (02) 327 8311.

Seaways Galleries, 75 Mullens St, Balmain 2041. (02) 810 8357. Marine art & artifacts.

Syme Dodson Gallery, 268 Devonshire St, Surry Hills 2010. (02) 319 0869.

Tamworth City Art Gallery, 203 Marius St, Tamworth 2340. (067) 66 2280.

Trevor Bussell Fine Art Gallery, 180 Jersey Rd, Woollahra 2025. (02) 32 4605. Fine Australian Investment Paintings 1800 to 1950. Restoration, framing and professional valuations.

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The Works Gallery, City Art Institute, Albion Ave, Paddington 2021. (02) 339 9551.
Tin Sheds Gallery, 154 City Road, University of Sydney 2066. (02) 692 3115.
Von Bertouch Galleries, 61 Laman St, Newcastle 2300. (049) 29 3584.
Wagga Wagga City Art Gallery, 40 Gurwood St, Wagga Wagga 2650. (069) 21 3621..
Watters Gallery, 109 Riley St, East Sydney 2010. (02) 331 2556.
Wollongong City Art Gallery, 85 Burelli St, Wollongong East 2500.(042) 28 7802.
Woolloomooloo Gallery, 84-86 Nicholson St, cnr Dowling St, Woolloomooloo 2011. (02) 356 4220. 13 September - 1 October, Mark Ward, paintings and prints.
Yuill Crowley, 270 Devonshire St, Surry Hills 2010. (02) 698 3877.

Australian Capital Territory

aGOG. australian Girls Own Gallery, 71 Leichhardt Street, Kingston 2604, PO Box 376 Kingston. (062) 95 3180. 6 - 30 September, Robin White, prints.
Australian National Gallery, Canberra 2600. (062) 71 2501. To 17 September, 'Aboriginal Art: The Continuing Tradition'.
Australian War Memorial, Canberra 2600. (062) 43 4211.
Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison St, Deakin 2600. (062) 82 5294.
Ben Grady Gallery, Top Floor, Kingston Art Space, 71 Leichhardt St, Kingston 2604. (062) 95 0447. Specialising in contemporary Australian art.
Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Gorman House, Ainslie Avenue, Braddon 2601. (062) 47 0188.
Canberra School of Art Gallery, Canberra Institute of the Arts, Baldessin Cres, Acton 2601. (062) 46 7946.
Chapman Gallery, 31 Captain Cook Cres, Manuka 2603. (062) 95 2550.
Crafts Council of the ACT, 1 Aspinal St, Watson 2602, (062)412373. 3 - 22 September, 'Trade Routes III', Aboriginal art and craft. To 23 September, Narragunnawali, Aboriginal artists working in the ACT.
Craftsman's Collection, 1st floor City Walk Arcade, 2 Mort Street Canberra 2601. (062) 57 4733.
Drill Hall Gallery, Kingsley St, Acton 2601.
Exhibition Room: changing exhibition from the Australian National University's collection. (062) 49 2501.
Main Hall: contemporary works from the Australian National Gallery. (062) 71 2501. 23 September - 5 November, 'Australian Artists' Books: The Eighties'
Galerie Constantinople, 55 Uriarra Rd, Queanbeyan 2620. (062) 975481. Phone for details. Approaches from artists welcome.
Giles Street Gallery, 31 Giles St, Kingston 2604. (062) 95 0489. To 14 September, John Waterhouse, 'Echoes of Time, Place and Things'. 17 September - 6 October, Leanne Crisp, paintings.
Hugo Galleries, Shop 9, Thetis Court, Manuka 2603. (062) 95 1008. Stock of works on paper by Whiteley, Preston, Pugh, Boyd, Rankin, Blackman, Nolan and leading overseas artists.
Narek Galleries, 'Cuppacumbalong', Naas Rd, Tharwa 2620. (062) 37 5116.
Nolan Gallery, 'Lanyon' via Tharwa 2620. (062) 37 5192. To 17 September, Stacha Halpern 'The Return to Australia'.
Solander Gallery, 36 Grey St, Deakin 2600. (062) 73 1780. 9 September - 1 October, Michael Taylor, paintings.

Victoria

Acland Street Art Gallery, 18 Acland St, St Kilda 3182. (03) 534 2818. September, Mark Strizic, paintings.
Ararat Gallery, Town Hall, Vincent St, Ararat 3377. (053) 52 2836. 6 - 27 September, Rose Marie Sculz, mixed media.
70 Arden Street Gallery, 70 Arden Street, North Melbourne 3051.
The Art Gallery, 142 Greville St, Prahran 3181. (03) 529 2433.
Artery Gallery, 3rd Floor, Rock O'Cashel Lane, Geelong 3220. (052) 218 668.
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Dallas Brooks Drive, The Domain, South Yarra 3141. (03) 654 6422.
Australian Impressions Gallery, 1st Floor, 175 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000. (03) 654 3332.
Australian Galleries, 35 Derby St, Collingwood 3006. (03) 417 4303.
Avant Galleries, 579 Punt Rd, South Yarra 3141. (03) 266 2009. Dealers in Australian and Aboriginal art.
Benalla Art Gallery, Bridge St, Benalla 3672 (057) 62 3027. To 19 September, Young Australians, contemporary paintings owned by Budget rent-a-car.; 21 September - 29 October, Arthur Boyd:
Bendigo Art Gallery, View St, Bendigo 3550. (054) 43 4991. 1 September - 15 October, Contemporary Drawings.
Blaxland Gallery, 6th Floor, Myer Melbourne, 316-346 Bourke St, Melbourne 3000. (03) 661 2547.
Bridget McDonnell Gallery, 130 Faraday St, Carlton 3053. (03) 347 1700. Modern Australian paintings and drawings.
Capricorn Gallery, 213 Franklin St, Melbourne 3000. (03) 328 2802. Continuous mixed exhibition of selected works including Ralph Wilson, Ross Watson, Peit Noist, Bob Baird, John Darbyshire.
Castlemaine Art Gallery, Lyttleton St, Castlemaine 3450. September, Permanent Collection: Australian art from 1860s to present day.
Caulfield Arts Complex, Cnr Glen Eira and Hawthorn Rds, Caulfield 3162. (03) 524 3287.
Charles Nodrum Gallery, 267 Church St, Richmond 3121. (03) 427 0140.
Christine Abrahams Gallery, 27 Gipps St, Richmond 3121. (03) 428 6099. To 14 September, Peter Avery, bush furniture; 18 September - 5 October, Deborah Halpern, ceramics; Linda Brassil, photography.
City Gallery, 45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000. (03) 654 6131.
City of Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, 40 Lydiard St, North Ballarat 3350. (053) 31 5622. 12 September -22 October, Benwell and Potter, ceramics; 6 September - 1 October, Ballarat Camera Club.
City of Hamilton Art Gallery, Brown St, Hamilton 3300. (055) 73 0460. 4 September - 16 October, Rose Farrell and George Parkin, contemporary photographs; 9 September - 5 October, Australian Cartoons 1853-83; 11 Sep-

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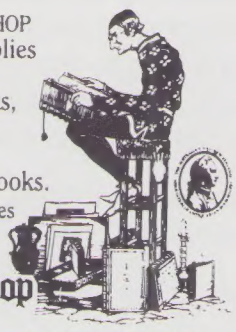

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tember - 9 October, Debbie Klein woodcuts.
City of Horsham Regional Art Gallery, 80 Wilson St, Horsham 3400. (053) 925575. 8 September - 11 October, Robert Papuga, paintings and gouaches..
David Ellis, 309 Gore St, Fitzroy 3065. (03) 417 3716.
Dempsters Gallery, 181 Canterbury Rd, Canterbury 3126. (03) 830 4464.
Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, 141 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000. (03) 654 2944.
Geelong Art Gallery, Little Malop St, Geelong 3220. (052) 93 645. To 10 September, Year 9 exhibition.
Gertrude Street Artists' Spaces, 200 Gertrude St, Fitzroy 3065. (03) 419 3406.
Girgis Klym Gallery at Rhumbarallas, 342 Brunswick St, Fitzroy 3065. (03) 417 2327.
Gore Street Gallery, 258 Gore Street, Fitzroy, 3065. (03) 417 7411. 5 - 30 September, Ivan Bray, paintings.
Gould Galleries, 270 Toorak Rd, South Yarra 3141. (03) 241 4701.
Continuous exhibitions of fine oils and watercolours by only prominent Australian artists, both past and present.
Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne, Parkville 3052. (03) 344 5270.
Greythorn Galleries, 2 Tannock St, North Balwyn 3104. (03) 857 9920.
Gryphon Gallery, The University of Melbourne, 160 Grattan St Carlton 3053. (03) 341 8587.
Heide Parke and Art Gallery, 7 Templestowe Rd, Bulleen 3105. (03) 850 1849.
Horsham Regional Art Gallery, Town Hall, 80 Wilson St, Horsham 3400. (053) 82 5575.
Jewish Museum of Australia, Cnr Arnold St & Toorak Rd, South Yarra 3141.
James Egan Gallery, 7 Lester Rd, Bungaree 3352. (053) 34 0376. Featuring the canvas, timber and hide paintings of 'Victorial Living Treasure' James Egan.
Latrobe Valley Arts Centre, 138 Commercial Rd, Morwell, 3840. (051) 34 1364. To 10 September, ICI contemporary art collection; 14 September - 28 October, post-Gough-ists; Owen Rye, pottery.
McClelland Gallery, McClelland Drive, Studio Park, Langwarrin 3910. (03) 789 1671. 17 September - 9 November, Charles Norton, watercolours; 3 September - 18 October, Sculpture from the permanent collection.
Meat Market Craft Centre, 42 Courtney St, North Melbourne 3051. (03) 329 9966.
Michael Wardell. 13 Verity Street. 13 Verity Street, Richmond 3121. (03) 428 3799.
Mildura Arts Centre, 199 Cureton Ave, Mildura 3500. (05) 23 3733. To 8 September, Red Gum - Crafts of Necessity. 1 September - 30 September, Trevor Weekes, 'And the Wolf shall Devour the Moon.' 17 September - 1 October, Hilda Elliott Memorial art exhibition.
Monash University Gallery, Ground Floor, Gallery Building, Monash University, Wellington Rd, Clayton 3168. (03) 565 4217.
Moorabbin Art Gallery and Rogowski's Antiques, 342 South Rd, Moorabbin 3189. (03) 555 2191. Paintings by prominent Australian and European artists; also permanent exhibition of over 70 works by Tom B. Garrett.
Mornington Gallery, 37a Main St, Mornington 3931. (059) 75 3915.
Mornington Peninsula Arts Centre, 4 Vancouver St, Mornington 3931. (059) 75 4395. 8 September - 15 October, Art of Asia: woodcuts on Asian religious mythology.
National Gallery of Victoria, 180 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne 3004. (03)618 0222. 14 September - 5 November, 'Angry Penguins and Realist Paintings in Melbourne in the 1940s'. 14 Sept - 19 Nov, 'William Blake in the Collection of the NGV'. 14 Sept to mid-Oct, 'Figuration and Formalism', Modern European and American Sculpture from the permanent collection. To 15 october, new acquisitions from the department of photography.
Niagara Galleries, 245 Punt Rd, Richmond 3121.(03) 429 3666. To 16 September, 'New Art Three', Niagara artists involved in the publication by Craftsman Press; 20 September to 7 October, Terry Batt, paintings.
Port Jackson Press, 397 Brunswick St, Fitzroy 3065. (03) 419 8988.
Print Council of Australia Gallery, 172 Roden St, West Melbourne 3003. (03) 328 2140.
Realities, 35 Jackson St, Toorak 3142. (03) 241 3312.
Reconnaisance, 72 Napier St, Fitzroy 3065. (03) 417 5114.
RMIT Gallery, 342-348 Swanston Street, Melbourne 3000. (03) 660 2180.
Roar.2, 115A Brunswick St, Fitzroy 3065. (03) 419 9975
Sale Regional Arts Centre, Civic Centre, MacAlister St, Sale 3850. (051) 44 2829. 5 - 29 September, Yoruba arts and crafts, tribal art from Nigeria. 8 September - 5 October, 'As I see Gippsland', Colin Johnson, paintings and drawings.
Shepparton Art Gallery, Civic Centre, Shepparton 3630. (058) 21 6352. 20 September - 18 October, ICI collection.
Stuart Gerstman Galleries, 29 Gipps St, Richmond 3121. (03) 428 5479 and at St Apern Strasse, Cologne, West Germany (0221) 23 5131.
Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery, Pioneer Settlement, Swan Hill 3585.(05) 32 1403. 1 - 10 September, Collie-Holst Collection; 11 - 17 September, pure art, pre-grade students, Mallee Region. 18 September - 9 October, Arch Cuthbertson, works on paper.
The Ian Potter Gallery, University of Melbourne, Swanston Street, (opp. tramstop 10), Parkville 3052. (03) 344 5148. To 1 October Illuminated manuscripts from Australian and New Zealand Collections.
The University Gallery, Undercroft, David Myers Building, Latrobe University, Bundoora 3083. (03) 479 1111.
Tolarno Galleries, 98 River St, South Yarra 3141. (03) 241 8381.
University Gallery, University of Melbourne, Parkville 3052. (03) 344 5148. Permanent exhibition of the University of Melbourne Art Collection. An exhibiton which includes contemporary, classical and ethnographic art, apintings, prints, drawings, sculpture and decorative arts.
Victorian Print Workshop, 188 Gertrude St, Fitzroy 3068. (08) 419 5820. Selected limited edition prints.
Warrnambool Art Gallery, Liebig St, Warrnambool 3280. (055) 64 7832. To 18 September, Sally Marsden, artist-in-residence; 16 September - 29 October, Henri Worland Memorial Print Award 1989. 19 - 24 September, porcelain painters

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Waverley City Gallery, 14 The Highway, Mount Waverley 3149. (03) 277 7261.
Westpac Gallery, The Theatres, Victorian Arts Centre, 100 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne 3004. (03) 617 8211.

South Australia

Art Gallery of South Australia, North Terrace, Adelaide 5000. (08) 223 7200.
Artzone, First Floor, 80 Hindley St, Adelaide 5000. (08) 212 4678.
BMG Fine Art Gallery, 88 Jerningham St, North Adelaide 5006. (08) 267 4449.
Carrick Hill, 590 Fullarton Rd, Springfield 5062. (08) 79 3886.
College Gallery, S.A. School of Art, SACAE, Holbrooks Rd, Underdale 5032. (08) 354 6111.
Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, 14 Porter St, Parkside 5063. (08) 272 2682.
Flinders University Art Museum, Flinders University of South Australia, Bedford Park, South Australia 5042. (08) 275 3911.
Greenhill Galleries, 140 Barton Tce, North Adelaide 5006. (08) 267 2887.
Riddoch Art Gallery, Commercial St East, Mount Gambier 5290. (087) 241 752.
The Jam Factory, 169 Paynham Rd, St Peters 5069. (08) 42 5661.

Western Australia

Art Gallery of Western Australia, 47 James St, Perth 6000. (09) 328 7233. To 29 September, Mary Morre: W.A. artist in focus.
Birukmarri Gallery, 47 High Street, Fremantle, (09) 335 4741. Aboriginal arts and crafts and changing exhibitions.
Crafts Council of Western Australia, 1st floor, Perth City Railway Station, Wellington Street, Perth 6000. (09) 325 2799. To 27 September, 'Tablescape', W.A. craftspeople
Delaney Galleries, 74 Beaufort St, Perth 6000. (09) 227 8996. July, Philippa O'Brien.
Fremantle Art Centre, 1 Finnerty St, Fremantle. (09) 335 8244. To 17 September, Fremantle Print Award; 21 Sept - 15 Oct, Robyn McAleer and Sally Morgan; Anne Neil, Yvonne Robertson.
Fremantle Art Gallery, 43 High St, Fremantle. (09) 335 5855.
Galerie Dusseldorf, 890 Hay St Perth WA 6000 (09) 325 2596. To 10 Sept., Douglas Chambers, paintings and drawings; 17 September - 8 October, Arthur Wicks, works on paper and installation; John Austin, 'Artists' Portraits', photographs.
Greenhill Galleries, 20 Howard St, Perth 6000. (09) 321 2369. 17 September - 12 October, Ray Crooke, paintings; Christine McCarthy, prints.
Lister Gallery, 53 Mount St, Perth 6000. (09) 321 5764. Mixed exhibitions by prominent Australian artists.
Lister Fine Art, 68 Mount St, Perth 6000. (09) 322 2963.
PICA, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, 51 James Street, Perth Cultural Centre, Perth 6000. (09) 227 6144.
Undercroft Galleries, The University of Western Australia, Nedlands 6009. (09) 443 3482. 6 - 27 September, Provincialism and Modernism in Perth (Undercroft Gallery); Linda Fardoe (Nolan Room).

Tasmania

Burnie Art Gallery, Wilmot St, Burnie 7320. (004) 5918.
Centre for the Arts Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hunter St, Hobart 7000. (002) 38 4300.
Chameleon Inc. Contemporary Art Space, Artists Studios and Gallery, 46 Campbell St, Hobart 7000. (002) 34 2744. 9 September - 7 October, ARX Metro Mania event (gallery 1); 'Songs Divine and Moral', David Godbold, a British Council toruing exhibition (gallery 2).
Cockatoo Gallery, 11 Tamar Street, Launceston 7250. (003) 31 2815.
Fine Arts Gallery, University of Tasmania, University Centre, Churchill Ave, Sandy Bay 7005. (002) 20 2233.
Freeman Gallery, 119 Sandy Bay Rd, Hobart 7005. (002) 23 3379.
Gallery Two, Ritchies Mill Arts Centre, 2 Bridge Road, Launceston 7250. (003) 31 2339. Specialising in high quality Tasmanian works of art and craft.
Masterpiece Art Gallery, 63 Sandy Bay Rd, Hobart 7000. (002) 23 2020.
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Wellington St, Launceston 7250. (003) 31 6777. To 16 July Contemporary Australian Figurative Ceramics; To 20 August, 'Angry Penguins'.
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 5 Argyle St, Hobart 7000. (002) 23 1422.

NT

Araluen Centre, Larapinta Drive, Alice Springs 5750. (089) 52 5022.
Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences, Bullocky Point, Fanny Bay 5790. (089)82 4211

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STOP PRESS

Angela Philp leaves the theory department of the Canberra School of Art to take over from David Dolan as director of the Nolan Gallery at Lanyon, ACT this month.

Diane Soumilas has resigned from her position as Director of the print Council of Australia Inc, in Melbourne to take up a curatorial internship at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, within the Print Department, commencing in early September 1989.

A remarkable collection of illuminated manuscripts from Australian and New Zealand public collections are included in an exhibition *Gold and Vellum: Illuminated Manuscripts in Australian and New Zealand* curated by Lyn Nossal and on show at the Ian Potter Gallery at the University of Melbourne until 29 September. Many of the manuscripts date from the the eleventh to the early sixteenth century.

At the end of July five artists from Sarawak took part in an artists' camp organised by Colin Jack Hinton at Kakadu as part of the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences' 1989 programme. The group exhibited some of their work at the Museum before they moved around Australia at lightning speed visiting art schools and galleries.

Victorian sculptor Inge King has been awarded a major commission for a sculpture to be sited in the foyer of ICI House, Melbourne. The work is due to be installed in the recently restored and refurbished 1958 Nicholson Street building in January 1990.

In a bid to improve the health and well-being of artists, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation has provided $26,000 to the Community Arts Network and Redletter Community Workshop (a graphic design and printing workshop), to develop an education kit and lecture programme which will be made available to artists, art schools and colleges throughout Victoria later this year. The programme will focus on painting, ceramics, sculpture, photography and printmaking - all areas in which artists can be exposed to a range of potentially dangerous chemicals. Further information from Julia Church (03) 650 9172 or Rhonda Galbally (03) 347 3777.

The 1989 Mosman Art Prize, one of Australia's oldest and worth $10,000 to the winner, was awarded to Cressida Campbell. Judges were Lou Klepac, Dinah Dysart and John McDonald, who gave high commendations to Anthony Galbraith and Geoff Harvey.

NSW Government has scrapped the Art Gallery free bus which used to pick passengers up outside the AGNSW (which is on no other bus route) and deliver them at Wynard Station and vice versa.

The final score at Melbourne's arts football match during July was: Artists - 13 goals, 5 points; Framers & Dealers - 3 goals, 6 points. While there were several tense moments, no injuries were reported.

312 Lennox Street Gallery will soon be closing, director Clinton Tweedie preparing to shift to a stylish new Richmond gallery he has had designed by two ex-members of the Biltmoderne group.

Questions are being asked around Melbourne over a string of solo commercial exhibitions from Debra Dawes, Matthys Gerber, Carole Roberts and others which have been held at Sydney's Mori Gallery, and then sent down for a second showing at the non-commercial George Paton Gallery.

The visual art collection in the State Library of Victoria had a near miss when the library's cafeteria (located directly beneath the art library) caught fire on 25 July. The State Library holds innumerable artists' sketches, diaries and letters, including S.T. Gill's gold-fields drawings, and irreplaceable documentary documentary material from the Heidelberg School and Angry Penguins group.

The First National Conference on Book Arts in the U.S.A. is being organised by the Center for Book Arts, New York, 30 March to 30 April, 1990. There will be a wide range of panel discussions on criticism (Rose Slivka and Carl Little), conservation (Mindell Dubansky of the Metropolitan), dealing and collecting (Dr Edelstein of the Getty, Dr Sackner, and dealer Tony Swicker) and history. Other panelists include Kim Merker (University of Iowa Center for the Book), Franklin Furnace founder Martha Wilson, and the editor of *Fine Print*. For info: Center for Book Arts, 626 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

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